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VOL. XXIV.  
ANGLICAN LIBERALISM



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ANGELICAN  
LIBERALISM

BY

TWELVE CHURCHMEN

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1908



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## THE MOTTO

οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἦκει, καὶ δέδωκεν  
ἡμῖν διάνοιαν, ἵνα γινώσκωμεν τὸν ἀληθινόν, καί  
ἐσμεν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ  
Χριστῷ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεός, καὶ ζωὴ  
αἰώνιος. τεκνία, φυλάξατε ἑαυτὰ ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων.

*From the First Epistle of St John (5. 20, 21).*

## A PRAYER FOR THE WRITERS AND THE READERS

LORD OF KNOWLEDGE, AND DISPENSER OF WISDOM,  
WHO DISCOVEREST DEEP THINGS OUT OF DARKNESS,  
O LOVER OF MEN, BESTOW ON US A MIND WITHOUT  
DISTRACTION, AND A PURIFIED SPIRIT, THAT WE  
MAY KNOW HOW PROFITABLE ARE THY HOLY TEACH-  
INGS, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

*Adapted from the Coptic Liturgy of St Mark.*



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## NOTE.

The Title of this book indicates among the Writers a general community of aim; but each Contributor is responsible only for his own Essay.

# Anglican Liberalism

## RELIGIOUS LIBERALISM

BY

THE REV. HUBERT HANDLEY

### I. THE ENGLISH CHURCH IS HERE

ONE thing about the Church of England is this—it is here. It is a fact. It exists. Notice it at this moment.

All around us are what we call *churches*. Indeed, our native land is, like a huge irregular chess-board, carved into parcels of ground named *parishes*. And in every parish rises a singular edifice, what men have even termed the “House of God.” It may be stately and of stone, its walls decorated by nature and time with moss and lichen, a visible and holy keepsake from the faith of the Middle Age

or the Saxon ; or it may be red, brick, modern, with one vile bell, springing up amid effort and debt in the mission district and the slum. But here they are, all around us—the churches.

And in every church is the apparatus, hereditary in Christendom and effective through centuries, of approach to the Most High and of visitation by God to the lonely and calling souls of men. There is the *altar*—in every church there is the altar—where disciples with bowed head recollect a Death two thousand years ago, a Death which has wrenched human history out of the rut of sin, and has been, in awful and secular proportions, the Gate of Life. There is the *lectern*, and on it is a Book from which are read thoughts ultimate, peremptory, delightful, which make men, as the Book says, “wise unto salvation.” There is the *pulpit*, whence a messenger with living voice proclaims to living listeners the vital applications of the Book. There is the *prayer-desk*, whence there stammer and aspire the inner longings of men’s

lives, their grief, remorse, ideals, and gratitude. There is the *font*, where little children, entering the perishable mundane, are received among the pilgrims who, at least, look towards the City which hath the foundations. There are tower and spire, arch and aisle, figures of the saints of old, symbols, emblems, memorials—all transparencies through which breaks the Heavenly Light, incentives through which breaks the Heavenly Appeal.

And outside the church, in the complex activities of club and institute, of lecture and amusement, of vigilance and tenderness for sick and dying, for tempted souls or hungry families—through all these ministrations the Spirit of the Living God *breathes*.

Once more, the men and women in the street; the crowds; these English folk—with their honest faces, downrightness, reticence, reserve of dignity—push into the secrets of their hearts; and, directly or indirectly, you will often find there witness, beautiful and unavowed, to the *fact* of the English Church.

My brother! you keen, hard, prosperous, ambitious man of business: whence come those fitful movements of the conscience? those best dissatisfactions? those instigations to the higher amid the hurry of that packed, self-centred life of yours? those snatches of the unearthly which will not let you be? Whence come they? The Eternal breathed them through the Church's prayer and hymn and Gospel story into the inmost and early sanctuary of your childhood's consciousness. My brother! strong artisan, whose little son has died: where did you learn in this dark hour to say, "Thy will be done?" You learnt it first, as we say, "at Sunday School"; and your peasant fathers taught it you, having learnt through the generations the grand acquiescence in God's appointments which the Church teaches her children. My brother! great man, man of eminence, prime minister; high on the pinnacle of power; surveying, directing the destinies of this people: where did you learn to set before them honourable

purposes, virile, pure pursuits, and all the altitudes of piety? If we may take your own word in answer to this question, your mother, the English Church, who spiritually bore you, pointed your first steps, and guided you continually, up that your mounting and beneficent career.

So the first note of the English Church is this—it exists. Existence is a homely but not inconsiderable advantage. Positivist Churches, Theistic Churches, Socialist Churches and others suggest fecund conceptions; they may have potentiality and promise; what they have not on any appreciable scale is existence. Not to these churches, marked with that telling defect, do the mass of English people, seeking religious nutriment, turn. The mass of English people, seeking religious nutriment, turn to institutions which have the merit of being here. The various Christian Communions have this merit. The Roman and the Free Churches, which we honour, but which are not now our concern, have it. The

English Church, which is now our concern, has it. The English Church is here.

## II. THE ENGLISH CHURCH MUST BE REFORMED

But, good reader, you say: This English Church is marred by grave faults, and is inefficient with lamentable shortcoming. And you begin the easy and serious indictment. (1) This English Church, you say, does not any longer minister to the souls of the *people*; has, in effect, no message for the strenuous lives of the toiling millions. The lofty but archaic eloquence of her worship, her primness, her chill decorum, her æsthetic frivolities, her irrelevant sermons (irrelevant to the surging, baffled thoughts, and the throbbing facts of our age), her occasional priestly airs and affectations, thin, foolish, and impossible—all this *misses the mark*, which is the souls of these Englishmen and Englishwomen around. The English Church does not any longer minister to the souls of the people. (2) Despite Maurice, Kingsley, and the Christian Social

Union, you affirm that the English Church has not generally furthered recent social progress, and now is inclined to sit on one side and to watch, rather than to accelerate and impel, the bounding hopes of social betterment. (3) The English Church, you say, is Pharisaical, intractable, and tart in her dealings with other Christian bodies. And you recall Mr Charles Booth censuring the English Church herein, and declaring that in London the effective leadership of Christian Communion lies neglected at her feet. (4) You complain, perhaps, of offensive irregularity in clerical incomes ; on the one hand, of faithful ministers of Christ in village cures, whose pittance does not always bring them quite enough to eat ; and, on the other hand, of faithful ministers of Christ, episcopal or otherwise, whose mundane recognitions appear to be excessive. (5) Lastly, and above all, not to protract the list, you say that the English Church has not made terms with modern knowledge. The English Church, in the doctrinal regions of her Book

of Common Prayer and in her Articles of Religion, did, you grant, spell out the Eternal verities with inspiration, with fidelity, and with power. But, you insist, the Church spelt out those verities in the language of a bygone age; the verities endure, the language is transitory; the verities live, the language decays; the verities we must keep immutably, "they are the secret of our being, and the meaning of our destiny"; the language we must change at once, it is the ragged and outworn garment of our thought. The difficulty, you add, is that in the formularies of the English Church the verities and the language are mixed; and, you conclude, the master religious task of that Church, if live it will, is the mighty dissociation, bold and delicate, conservative, radical, and reverent—the dissociation of these abiding truths from that ephemeral utterance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the many such warnings resounding in our ears here is one spoken by a chief watchman on a high tower of observation, looking back down the ages and telling us,

Good reader, I wish you knew with what fervour and penitence many of us Anglican clergy concede the general justice of your reproach. The faults of our beloved Church, and her amazing lack, are ever in our minds ; they haunt us ; in the busy morning, in the quiet evening, in the still night, in early manhood, in middle age, we wonder and ponder and pray about them. When to this *nation* will this English Church arise, shine ; for her if we are willing to hear, what he sees. “It needs but a glance through history at the wrecks of old religions to see how they failed from within. The priests of Egypt, who once represented the most advanced knowledge of their time, came to fancy that mankind had no more to learn, and upheld their tradition against all newer wisdom, till the world passed them by and left them grovelling in superstition. The priests of Greece ministered in splendid temples and had their fill of wealth and honours, but men who sought the secret of a good life found that this was not the business of the sanctuary, and turned away to the philosophers. Unless a religion can hold its place in the front of science and of morals, it may only gradually, in the course of ages, lose its place in the nation, but all the power of statecraft and all the wealth of the temples will not save it from eventually yielding to a belief that takes in higher knowledge and teaches better life.”

E. B. TYLOR (*Anthropology*, pp. 371, 372).

light is come? When, once more, will she be to this *people* something "intimate, grand, and vital?" When will she lose that note in her which is insufferably terrene? When will she again astound us with her moral distinction? When will her theological positions be re-stated so as to the best thought of our day not to seem anti-reasonable? We have anticipated, in our own stinging experience, the gist of your imputations.

And yet our confidence in this Church of our fathers is strangely quiet and deep; it lies among the bases of our being. We believe that the *Realities* which were once committed to the Church of England gradually to disclose; which from her have broken out through English history in the long, radiant line of English Christian lives; which have shone through her age-long ministrations, lightening onward and upward the national designs; which have sustained the national character in the shock and flux of national vicissitude; which the Christian men of old in

our land tried, for their own generations, again and again to spell out and adumbrate and lisp the name of in prayer and confession, in homily and article—we believe that these Realities these Ultimates, are still behind our Church ; that they need only amended ecclesiastical expression to come forth in their old benedictive power, and to lift our single selves and the national habit into the heavens. For unseen and for seen, for faith and practice, we believe that the English Church may still be adequate. Mr Lecky somewhere dwells on the injury to France from the break, at her Revolution, of her institutional continuity. The new religions which earnest men project among us break the spiritual continuity ; they snap the thread of our priceless heritage—the English Christian consciousness ; they do not telescope into the next stage, they leave a gap ; they do not develop, they jump. Through the English Church our religion can *grow* ; here is the line of life ; here is organic process ; here is what the past unfolded ; here lies

evolutionary expectation. "In what we improve, we are never wholly new ; in what we retain, we are never wholly obsolete" (Burke). We believe that the English Church may still suffice. Only the English Church must be reformed.

### III. THE REFORMERS MUST BE RELIGIOUS

*Ut incurvem ad voluntatem Tuam tortuositatem meam*, says the Imitation. Here is the key of achievement. Church reform is a *religious* task. Church reformers need, indeed, at their disposal, as instruments in their venture, many and varied talents—learning, ability, scholarship, critical faculty, historical, scientific, philosophic competence, acquaintance and sympathy with other religions, tact, practice in affairs, conciliatory manners, etc. But these things are tools ; and not the tools, but the men behind the tools, radically matter. The men behind those tools, for that work, must be religious ; must be men who have in them *eternal life* ; men who in the inmost recesses

of their being are in hidden, filial accord with God ; men who are ever bending to the Divine Will herein their own tortuosity. The enterprise is not mainly structural ; it is mainly spiritual.

For instance, we desire that the Church should play a nobler, leading part in social improvement. Ah ! churchmen, learn purity and passion of motive here from those humble men before your eyes, the labour reformers. I do not say, learn from them policy ; for the labour policy may need great hammer strokes of correction to beat it into shape. But I say, learn from the labour party, in social reform, grandeur of moral purpose. I was at the large meeting in the Queen's Hall, Langham Place, in February 1906, soon after the General Election, when Mr Keir Hardie presided over " London's Welcome to the Labour Members." I shall never forget the *spirit* of that assembly ; the generosity of the common emotion ; the mental melting of all distinctions of rank and education in the fires of human brotherhood,

in the burning intent to help less happy lives and to heal the social woes of England. Never, I must sorrowfully confess, did I find such a spirit at a social reform meeting of churchmen. We churchmen must do as those labour men had done, we must herein *get the mind of Christ*; we must cast out, and hurl over the precipice, the demons in our Church of worldliness, cupidity, clerical ambition, episcopal parade, obsequious class estimates, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. For social reform is not some mere matter of bricks re-arranged into better poor men's houses, not some mere debate on municipal ownership of gas undertakings; it has to do with human brotherhood; it is a factor in "human amplitude"; it is part of *eternal life*.

Again, we desire to live on better terms with other Christian Communion, and to move with them toward some converging point of fellowship. First, then, our Church must repent her own guilty share in the

estrangement ; must wash away that taint of condescension ; must drop those teasing nicknames ; must forget her own social prestige. Do not so much modify the constitution as mend the heart. Let the avenues of approach to concord on our side be humble and religious ; let our Church bend to the Divine Will herein her own tortuosity.

Again, we dream our dream—our Church repenting her sins and ministering indeed to the English *people* ! Well, we liberal clergy who believe that we have a live, human, almighty message from our Saviour to the hearts of the living men of the twentieth century—we must, for our message's sake, learn from our clerical brethren, High and Low, to heal our own defect ; we must learn from the best High Church clergy reverence in worship, the power of “retreat,” parochial conscientiousness, a determined care for the sick, stricken, dying, a pastoral efficiency which rises here and there in the lanes of the cities to pastoral heroism ; we must learn from the

best Evangelical clergy humility, converting purpose, the due place of Feeling in spiritual completeness. "This little Book," says the Preface, long attributed to Luther but since found to date from an earlier age, of the *Theologia Germanica*, "teacheth whereby we may discern the true and upright friends of God from those unrighteous and false free-thinkers, who are most hurtful to the Holy Church."

Once more, in the realm of doctrinal statement we desire reconstructions. The reconstructions must not, however, be little, separate, clever, rational buildings on their own account; they must be part of the inherited and enlarged spiritual Temple. The new knowledge must *serve* the old religion; must be absorbed and assimilated in the old religion. The mass of churchmen will accept theological re-statement when they find that it is religious; when they find that the old blest pieties and sanctities, the old consummate inducements of the Christian *char-*

*acter*, are not dropped out, but are eminently preserved.

Thus does the Church reformer see before him a task superb ; and thus needs he for it, first of all, high interior quality—*ut incurvem ad voluntatem Tuam tortuositatem meam.*

# THEOLOGICAL LIBERALISM

BY

PROFESSOR F. C. BURKITT

LIBERALISM is a word that is losing its charm as a popular label, and many people may think its association with Theology altogether incongruous. "Theological Radicalism" may seem to promise sincerity, "Theological Conservatism" suggests safety and reverence for the past. "Liberalism" nowadays conveys to some minds a notion of flatness and vagueness, a notion of halting in a half-way house. What use or justification, we may ask, is there for Liberal Theology in the Church of England at the present time?

There are really two objections which have to be faced by the Liberal Theologian, objections which come from opposite sides and only

unite in their common denial of his right to exist. On the one hand, the thorough-going Conservatives, from Pope Pius X. downwards, tell us that the true doctrine, the true theology, is altogether unchanging. It has been, they say, already revealed and in essentials long ago codified, so that any attempts to modify theology in the directions which seem to be indicated by modern views of the universe can only be unfaithful tamperings with the sacred deposit of revealed Truth. On the other hand, those who are imbued with the Modern Spirit—I have no other name for it sufficiently general—tell us that such tamperings are not only unfaithful but useless. Christianity, they tell us in effect, is merely one of the natural products of former and more ignorant ages, ages which thought that the earth was the centre of the universe and that the heavens revolved round it. The sun still appears to rise and set, but we know that appearance to be an illusion. We have mastered the real motions of the heavenly bodies; we have

recovered from rocks and fossils the general outline of the history of our planet before man had come into being; we have studied the surprising and lengthy natural history of man, from the cave-dweller with his rude flints to the present age of machinery and from the perhaps uncivilisable Australasian to the nervous degenerate of our own race. Everywhere the things we can see and measure are governed by laws, laws which have been always there and which we cannot alter, but which nevertheless were for the most part unknown to those among whom Christianity grew up. And side by side with the harnessing of many of the forces of nature for the use of man, social conditions have arisen profoundly different from those in which and out of which Christianity took shape. The soil and the atmosphere have changed, they say: it is useless to try to keep the old tree in vigour.

I have ventured to employ the metaphor of a tree, because after all one of the facts before us is that Christianity is still alive. It is alive

as a religion in general, and also that particular branch of it which we call the Church of England is alive. Life is a very mysterious thing, whether in individuals or in societies, and the only sure test that an individual or a society can live in a particular environment is the test of actual experience. That the Church of England continues to live is the proof, and the only proof, of its right to live.

But all life, as we know it on this earth, carries with it the liability to wither and to die. And because the Church is alive now, that does not necessarily promise that the Church will be able always to maintain its existence with unimpaired vitality under the rapidly changing conditions of modern life. "Life," says a famous definition of it, "is a power of adaptability to environment," and it is from this point of view that Liberalism in theology claims to be heard. Liberalism at least professes a certain flexibility, a certain breadth of view, which tries in changing times to take into account both the new and the

old, to understand both, and to attempt to fit the old to the new.

Our life, moreover, is fed by that which has had life. Water and salt alone will not nourish us, and the use of religion is to nourish the divine element in man with the Bread of Life. The problem therefore we have to face is not so much how to keep Anglican Theology alive in an unsympathetic world of thought; what we need to consider is whether Anglican Theology is wholesome food for Englishmen of our generation, for the living Church in our midst. Is it, in its present condition, fit to keep the Church alive? Theology is the Science of Religion, the ordered and reasoned expression of the relations of God and man. Like other branches of science which deal with what men have been able to learn about this great and wonderful universe, there are problems and questions pertaining to it which altogether elude our comprehension. So far all are agreed. The difficulty comes in when we come to particulars,

to the actual statements about God and man that have been made in the past, in other words, to that part of theology which is transmitted to us as a part of history.

Perhaps the "plain man," or the "man in the street," does not fully recognise to what extent the theology of his forefathers is being modified by modern historical study—I mean the scientific study of the past in its widest sense. But that he is conscious of it is shewn by many indications, and by none more surely than his general abstention from attendance at any church. This is a serious symptom which goes much deeper than mere dissatisfaction with the arrangements for Christian worship, whether ritual or social. We have to face the fact that thousands of men and women of all ranks feel that the Christian religion, as officially presented to them, is hopelessly out of touch with their life, and rests upon theories which, where they can test them, seem out of date and unverifiable. The lapsed millions have no special animus

against the Christian Church. Most Englishmen, indeed, have a sort of affection for what is old and respectable, as long as it does not inconvenience them. They like to see picturesque survivals, like Crosby Hall, standing in their midst. But as soon as the picturesque survival is found to be in the way of something really important and vital, such as a modern business concern, they do not care to put themselves out to preserve it, and so it disappears. The Christian Church to-day is in the position that Crosby Hall occupied a few years ago, and if it is to be preserved it must convince men that it provides what they cannot do without.

The Liberal theologian's task is so to restate the Christian message that it can be understood by the modern man. And, further, the Liberal theologian is generally himself enough of a modern man to believe that some parts of what generally passes for the Christian message and the Christian organisation are really outworn, and need to be dropped to make room for new

developments and new arrangements. It is a conceivable view of Christianity that our religion as a whole is outworn, that it cannot be restated, that if it be restated essential parts must be dropped, that it is destined to perish notwithstanding our efforts. It may be, it certainly will happen in particular cases, that the restatement is inadequate, that here and there we may try to cast out essential particulars and cling to non-essentials. But such things do not relieve us from the duty of making the attempt, nor will individual mistakes affect the final result. The fate of the Church is not really dependent on the efforts of the churchmen of a particular generation. If the Church's God be ultimately nothing more than an Idol, a wholly subjective dream with no reality behind to give it substance, then indeed the end of Christianity will sooner or later come. But if the Father whom Jesus Christ claimed to know be more than a dream, if the analogy of human kinship by which Christians attempt to describe their relation-

ship to the unseen Power that rules the world be justified really in fact—and to have faith in God is just this—then we may have confidence that Christianity will live, is destined to live.

But belief in a God who may not inaptly be styled our Father is not the whole of Christian Faith. To be a Christian is to believe in Christ, in His Mission, in the kingdom which His Gospel proclaimed. I have tried to use terms suggested by the New Testament records themselves rather than those of the Creeds, but in the end the thing signified is essentially the same. And it is well from time to time to try to express in our own words what we mean by our formulas. The language of theological dogma may be classical, but undeniably it is now, like Latin, a dead language and requires translation. Modern folk are impatient of what is called dogma. At the same time they profess to admire and reverence the Prophet of Nazareth whom the Christians call their Lord. No doubt there are texts in the Gospels which have been unfairly pressed to “prove”

(as the phrase goes) "the divinity of Jesus Christ." No doubt many modern critical investigators have rejected as unhistorical many sayings and doings attributed to Him. But on almost any critical theory enough remains to challenge inquiry. We still have to ask what right He had to say "*Ye have heard this and that was said by them of old time, but I say unto you another rule*"; and again we have to ask what right He had to say "*Follow Me.*" Those who admit the right of Jesus thus to speak with authority are, in other words, confessing Him to be the incarnate Word of the Father. And to follow Jesus means to be ready to give up everything else, even life itself, if thereby the kingdom of His Father may come.

The nature which human beings share with other animals is unable to follow the call of Jesus. It is insufficient both in insight and in power. But whatever our ancestry may have been, we are now different from our fellow-creatures; if there be any truth at all in

religion, it is that human personality includes, in greater or less degree, a divine element. Not that this element is the whole of human nature, or that it is always or universally dominant. The contrary case is what meets us on all sides: the divine element is constantly being thwarted and overpowered by the lower nature, and this is what theologians call sin. But the mere fact of the struggle in man is evidence of the reality of his double nature. "It is Thy presence within us that makes us conscious of ourselves and 'Thee'";<sup>1</sup> this presence animating individual men, part of the divine nature and yet immanent in man, is called the Holy Spirit. The Christian doctrine does not, like some modern systems, confine the idea of God to that which is immanent in man; nor, on the other hand,

<sup>1</sup> I prefer to give this sentence as I heard it in the prayer of a Highland minister. He took it from *Prayers for Public Worship by the late John Service, D.D.* (1885), where it runs: "It is Thy presence in us which makes us conscious of ourselves and of Thy works" (p. 14, see also p. 111).

does it regard the animal nature as being in itself evil. Evil lies in anarchy within the complex personality of man, and this occurs whenever the higher and lower parts of his personality are not in harmony with one another. It is the nature of the animal part to grow, to attain to maturity, to become feeble, to die; it is the nature of the divine part ever to claim more and more dominion, and to be unsatisfied unless more and more dominion is willingly conceded. As a man becomes more and more under the dominion of the divine spirit he becomes more and more holy, more and more fit to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

This doctrine of God is little more than a paraphrase of the familiar answers which the Church of England teaches her children in the Catechism to be the essential meaning of her creed. There is, however, one point which has not yet been touched. Christian philosophy is not satisfied to regard Jesus merely as a legislator and an example; in fact, it does not

chiefly regard Him as a legislator and example. The Catechism, we know, tells us of "God the Son, who redeemed me and all mankind." Can this doctrine also be stated in modern language and under the categories of modern thought?

It would be idle not to confess the immense difficulties which here confront us, or to claim that any school or party in the Church has an answer ready. It is easy to repeat the old formulas, but it is not easy to give them a real meaning for the world as we view it now. At least, we can say that the work of Jesus Christ is bound up with the existence of the Christian Society. The Christian Society is the body of those persons who throughout the centuries that have elapsed since the Crucifixion of Jesus believe that through His life and work they have entered into a new and filial relation to the unseen reality that lies behind experience. Yet we must not say that Jesus Christ first made intercourse possible between God and man,

or that every good gift of God has come to man through Jesus Christ. And, moreover, when we seek to make the language of the New Testament our own, we are compelled to translate the belief of the first Christians in an immediate and complete catastrophe into our expectations of gradual and organic change.

As I have said, no full answer is ready. But something may be done along the line which has been suggested by another writer in this Volume, Prof. Percy Gardner, in *Exploratio Evangelica*. According to Christian theology, as first formulated by St Paul, the Christian rite of baptism by which the individual enters into the Christian Society signifies a death to old conditions and a new life imparted and dominated by the divine influence. The man is now "in Christ": he breathes a new air in the Christian atmosphere. Similarly, says Dr Gardner, old ideas and doctrines must be "baptised into Christ" before they can attain their highest, that is,

their permanent significance.<sup>1</sup> The Christian missionary must make converts not only of men but also of ideas, that they also may be redeemed and purified for the glory of God and the use of men.

But what, we must ask, has our Church of England specially to offer? What idea has it whereby it may live? The first answer, as was said at the beginning of this article, is that it is now, as a matter of fact, alive. Yet every individual is different in some way from others, whereby it is individualised, and the special mark of the Anglican Church, apart from the historical accidents of its constitution, is the ideal of the *Via Media*. These famous words have fallen a little out of fashion as a battle-cry since the days of Newman. But it seems to me that what was rightly criticised when it was regarded as the description of an existing state of things may be justified as an ideal. Too often the Church of England has been content to rest in the *Via Media* when it

<sup>1</sup> P. Gardner, *Exploratio Evangelica*, 2nd ed., p. 381 f.

ought to have been advancing along it. The *Via Media* does not mean that the Anglican has just hit the happy mean between Rome and Geneva, Catholic Tradition and Scientific Rationalism. Even if he may have done so at a particular moment, we live in a changing world, and those who stand still soon find themselves on one side or the other of the road. But the idea of the *Via Media*, as distinct from its realisation at any given moment, is one that the Liberal Churchman does well to cherish. It represents not so much a compromise between ideals as an effort to render justice to them and to the facts on which they are based. Man really is body and spirit, individual and social. His religion must have its roots in the past and yet nourish him in the present world. To fulfil this aim it must be, like man himself, a thing of mixed nature, having the power to take up and assimilate new ideas, to adapt itself to new conditions, while all the while retaining a real continuity with the past out of which it has sprung.

The Church of England, as reformed in the sixteenth century and as settled by the Caroline divines, did represent an effort to render justice to competing ideals rather than the tendency, then dominant elsewhere, at least in our own country, to cherish single aspects of life or doctrine to the suppression of others. A harder task lies before us, if our Church is to command the allegiance of the coming age. We have to carry on the hope of the Kingdom of God and the preparation for it through a new and unsurveyed region. On the one hand a false turn will engulf us in the bog of intellectual routine and immobility; on the other side lies the danger of losing touch with the heritage of the past and losing our way in the wilderness of unverifiable speculation. Yet, after all, the result does not lie in our hands. If the Church be really guided by the Divine Spirit, as Christians believe, the *Via Media* will open before us, and those whose ears are attuned aright will hear the word behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

# BIBLICAL LIBERALISM

BY

THE REV. J. R. WILKINSON.

THERE can be no question that the Bible is not for people of these days what it was for our forefathers. It is not now so naturally and instinctively appealed to and accepted as an authoritative rule of life, it is not read so constantly and zealously as it used to be. We find even among the members of our congregations that the practice of regular daily Bible reading, so characteristic of the religious life of our forefathers, has lost ground. Moreover, as we compare the popular sermon or religious discourse of to-day with the typical sermon of past time, we notice that the former is distinguished by a certain emancipation from the text of the Bible and from that sense of the

absolute authority of the Bible which dominated the sermons of our forefathers. It seems as if the popular religious teacher felt that his listeners required from him instruction and help different from that which the Bible affords. The Bible, in fact, is not so popular—if we may use this word—as it once was. Why is this so?

The decline in the practice of mere Bible reading is no doubt partly due to the fact that the Bible now competes with many other books for the attention of the people. In days gone by, many of those who could read had only the Bible within their reach; now multitudes of other books are easily procurable. This, however, does not by itself account for the loosening of the hold of the Bible upon the popular mind, for the manifest decrease in real deference to the Bible as a religious and moral authority. The true explanation, it seems to me, lies in something deeper than this: in a change of outlook, in a fundamental difference that exists between the modes of thought of men of to-day and of our forefathers.

This change of outlook is specially marked in the attitude towards the miraculous. A century ago and less, ordinary people found little difficulty in believing that Almighty God actually intervened in the course of human affairs by isolated extraordinary acts of power ; their minds could rest in such a conception, and found in it a satisfactory explanation of events that seemed to them outside the ordinary course of nature. They attached a real meaning to the verdict, "an act of God." In one of our county towns the Market Cross records an event which took place in the middle of the eighteenth century—the death of a market woman immediately after she had told a lie in the course of her trading, and had called upon God to strike her dead if she had not told the truth. The people of those days could be satisfied with the explanation that this death was due to direct Divine intervention in order to punish a breach of Divine law. An instance such as this brings home to us the distance we have travelled during the last century. The

ordinary mind to-day could not rest in such an interpretation of a similar event; it would instinctively demand a natural explanation, nor would it be satisfied until such an explanation were forthcoming. Whatever theories we may hold as to the occurrence of miracles in the past, we do not accept, we cannot accept, a miracle as the final explanation of an event of to-day. A century of mental revolution, of marvellous discovery in all branches of knowledge, and of increasing education among the masses of the people, stands between us and our forefathers, so that we can no longer think as they.

Now, it would not be true to say that our thought is in this respect less religious in character than theirs, for in the case in question the modern attitude of mind surely involves a loftier conception of the Divine Nature than would suffer us to regard Almighty God as directly intervening to punish a poor sinful woman. Yet we must recognise that this development in our ways of thinking does make

it harder for us than for our forefathers to sympathise with the thought of the writers of the Bible. The attitude of our forefathers towards the miraculous coincided to a great extent with that of the sacred writers, hence the forms of thought under which the spiritual truth of the Bible is presented offered no obstacle to the reception of that truth; our forefathers came at once into intellectual touch with the Bible, whereas, between the mind of the ordinary man of our times and the mind of the Biblical writers there yawns a gulf which makes intellectual sympathy difficult and tends to isolate the Bible from the actual life of to-day.

It is a gulf which is indeed bridged over, though perhaps not without great spiritual difficulty, by those whose hearts are in tune with the deep inward truths of the Bible; yet for the majority of men, even of professing Christians, it exists unbridged. Their sense of the inconsistency of the attitude of the Biblical writers with modern ideas may not have caused

them to reject the Bible as out of date and useless, they may still regard the Bible as a sacred book, and of Divine authority, yet they so distinguish between the Bible record and the life of to-day as to put themselves out of practical and vital touch with the Scriptures. They set the Bible in isolation. It treats of times and circumstances when other laws obtained than those of to-day. Men in these modern days neither see nor expect to see miracles ; they are left to be guided by the ordinary light of conscience and reason. But it was otherwise—they would assert—with the men whose histories are recorded in the Bible ; they saw miracles and were often helped and guided miraculously. The world of the Bible is thus kept apart from the world of ordinary human life, and the influence of the Bible as a practical guide in the conduct of life is seriously affected. How can the history of Israel, with its miraculous episodes, and instances of direct Divine intervention, be regarded as affording principles of action for a modern state which receives no

such miraculous guidance? How can the life of the Bible saint bring real encouragement to the man of to-day in the time of temptation, when the one is reported to have been miraculously enlightened and guided at critical periods of his life, while the other receives no such miraculous guidance, and does not even expect to receive it? No doubt many religious teachers, who have tried to bring the warnings and encouragement of the Bible to bear in some particular case of temptation, have received the answer once given to the writer of this paper: "Oh, but that man was miraculously helped by God." At all events this answer expresses a widespread attitude of mind, wherein the Bible is practically out of contact with the daily life. It is still honoured as the Word of God; but it is not what it was to our forefathers, is not read as it used to be, because it does not seem to give the help that is required by men of to-day.

We are convinced that the Bible, as a whole, can only be again brought into vital touch with

the life of to-day by establishing afresh the bond of intellectual sympathy with the Bible. This cannot be done by setting back the clock of intellectual development ; we cannot possibly make ourselves think in the way our forefathers thought. There is, however, another method open to us, the method of Biblical Liberalism, wherein our intellectual attitude towards the Bible is affected by the same influences which have fashioned our intellectual attitude towards phenomena of life and nature, so that our thought concerning the Bible is brought into harmony with the instinctive demands of the modern intellect.

Now, the modern intellect instinctively demands that nothing in the world of phenomena remain in isolation. The Bible belongs to this world of phenomena ; it is the product of the literary activity of various authors throughout a period of some thousand years. In its outward form it presents phenomena similar to those of any other literature. Modern thought is therefore compelled by its very nature to treat

these phenomena in the same way as it treats those of any other literature. It cannot rest in the conception that in the Bible, where men write for men, where thoughts are expressed in human words, there is something so unique as to be judged by rules and methods other than those it ordinarily employs. Where history is written, modern thought must bring its critical faculty to bear before the truths of the history can be assimilated. Where moral teaching is given or doctrinal statements are made, modern thought cannot treat these in isolation as incidents of supernatural revelation; it must view even these, seeing that they are expressed in human words, as bound up with the history of human thought by the chain of cause and effect.

And Biblical Liberalism recognises this claim in no grudging spirit. It does not confine modern thought to the investigation of those philological and historical questions which form the subject matter of the ordinary introductions to the study of the Bible; wher-

ever the mind can reach it must have free range. Even the thoughts, the conceptions, expressed in the writings of the Bible must no longer be set apart as above the sphere of the intellect ; they are facts in the history of human thought, and therefore the intellect has a right to treat them as facts ; it must investigate them and comprehend them in accordance with the ordinary methods by which it comprehends facts.

Biblical Liberalism, therefore, accepts and welcomes, in the interests of religion, the results of that free and unfettered assimilation and interpretation of the phenomena of the Bible by the modern mind known as Biblical Criticism. In the light of these results the Bible is seen to be no longer isolated ; its literature assumes its proper place in the literature of the world, giving and taking ; its history runs along the lines of orderly natural development ; in its religion we trace a gradual and natural evolution from earlier lower conceptions to the highest spiritual intuitions, running parallel

with and in connection with the gradual advance of Israel in civilisation and in inter-communication with other civilised nations of the Eastern world. While there is no lack of wonder, the general atmosphere of the preternatural in which the history of the Bible is enwrapped is now seen to belong not so much to the events themselves as to the attitude of the mind of the narrator who is often found to be separated by some considerable distance of time from the facts he records. In short, the distinction between Biblical and secular history is seen to be abolished. The nation of Israel, like any other nation, developed in accordance with natural law and under the natural influence of its environment ; and the saints of the Bible lived, on the whole, natural lives, influenced and guided as men are to-day. The chasm between the Bible and the life of to-day is thus bridged over by Biblical Criticism.

But it may be objected : the man of to-day who accepts the results of Biblical Criticism is indeed brought into touch with the Bible ; he

can now intellectually appreciate and assimilate the contents of the Bible ; the chasm has been bridged over, but has not the Bible thereby been divested of all that made it precious to mankind ? Can it contain for him, as for our forefathers, the record of Divine revelation, the Divine rule of life ? all that is summed up in the phrase—Word of God ? Records of instances of Divine supernatural intervention which his forefathers simply accepted as a plain statement of facts, these he now perceives to be either legendary or the supernatural interpretation of natural events ; the doctrine of apostle and prophet once regarded as absolute truth supernaturally revealed he now finds to be conditioned by the intellectual and moral environment of the teacher and to have its natural place in the history of the human mind. Has not the Bible thus lost for him its spiritual, its Divine authority ?

The objection is, to a certain extent, valid. The sense of authority in the Bible depending entirely upon the supernatural in the Bible

and upon its containing doctrines and rules, which are the absolute unconditioned expression of the Divine will, has vanished from the mind of him who has accepted the position of Biblical Liberalism. And it must also be acknowledged that, in the movement to apply modern methods of inquiry to the study of the Bible, special prominence in the past has been given to the destructive side, so that it might seem to be antagonistic to the recognition of anything Divine in the Bible. But we must remember that this whole movement has been one of revolt against unnatural conditions. The army of modern thought has stormed a barrier separating it from that to which it felt it had a rightful claim—a barrier erected by those who, by unjustifiable methods, sought to defend the Divine character of the Bible. Is it to be wondered at that in resentment the charge has been pressed even to the denial of a Divine element in the Scriptures? The question, however, is this: Whether this denial is the necessary consequence of the study of the

Bible by modern methods ; whether, with the abandonment of belief in supernatural Biblical infallibility, the belief in the Bible as containing for us Divine guidance and teaching must also go ?

Some at least of those who have adopted these modern views of the Bible can testify that this result does not follow by any means. They were, perhaps, brought up in childhood to regard the Bible from cover to cover as in one plane of Divine revelation, as throughout the authoritative and infallible Word of God ; with growing mind and advancing knowledge their belief became to them the source of spiritual trouble and anxiety ; at last they learned to view the sacred writings in the perspective of human development ; then the Bible became to them the Word of God indeed—the source of spiritual light, encouragement, and help. Through learning to know the Bible as human, through abolishing the barrier between the Bible and the life of to-day, they have learned to know it as truly Divine ;

they have found in it the everlasting Word of God.

Let us endeavour to describe in some detail the attitude of the liberal believer towards the Bible, and, in the first place, his attitude towards the Old Testament as a whole. He frankly accepts the teaching of Biblical criticism that the supernatural scheme under which the history of Israel is presented in the Old Testament is not as a whole historically accurate. Much of that history, more particularly the earlier stories, he believes to be legendary in character; and even in the more strictly historical portions he finds much therein treated from the standpoint of supernaturalism which can be interpreted more naturally in accordance with the ordinary laws of human affairs. He recognises that the circumstances of the rise and fall of Israel there treated as the result of the direct blessing and judgment of God were on the whole the necessary consequence of the international politics of the time, and that the fate of the nation was analogous to that of

many other small states of Syria which succumbed in the struggles between the great empires of Mesopotamia and Egypt. His mind is simply compelled to accept the more natural interpretation which pictures Israel as on the whole but one nation among many, and its history as a natural episode in the history of mankind. But though he thus refuses to accept the scheme of the Biblical writers as in exact accord with the actual facts of the history, this scheme is still for him the most precious thing in the Old Testament. He does not, like the pure historian, reject one book because it is less historical than another ; rather for him the point of view of the writer is the most important consideration. It is this which brings him into touch with the minds of those great hero prophets who traced in the course of the history of Israel, in the events of the national life, the hand of Almighty God dealing with men in accordance with His own laws of holiness, righteousness, and mercy. And though he perceives that their range of

view was restricted, and that their interpretation of the facts of history was distorted by their religious conceptions, still, those conceptions bring him into communion with the soul of the prophet, wherein lies the fundamental truth of the Old Testament, the mystery that can only be approached in reverent faith. As he reads the Old Testament he reads the hearts of men in conscious communion with God, who worked and taught, suffered and died, under the most intense conviction that the course of natural law and of human affairs was the expression of the Divine Will. The liberal believer may find much in the thought of these men that is limited and conditioned by their circumstances; but from the words and thoughts he rises into communion with the spirit of the sacred writers, and there receives the Divine message which fortifies him in the faith that all history, not only the history of Israel, but also the history of his own times, is a most sacred thing, wherein he must trace the working of the living God,

who rules in judgment and mercy. His liberal thought has indeed forced him to recognise that Biblical events ran, as a whole, in accordance with natural law; but it is this very perception that has made the Old Testament for him a sacred record which sanctifies the life of to-day and delivers to him a Word of God which is steadfast for ever.

Now, let us consider the attitude of the liberal believer towards the New Testament, and more particularly towards the teaching of such an one as the Apostle St Paul. He, in the first place, recognises that modern investigation of the circumstances of the historical and intellectual environment of St Paul has made it clear that the forms under which that Apostle delivers his teaching, the formulæ of his doctrine, can no longer be regarded as objects of direct Divine revelation. Saul the Pharisee was in mind the father of Paul the Apostle. The Christian teaching of the great missionary preacher was conceived and delivered under the forms of thought and expression which he

had learned in the Rabbinic schools. The Hebrew of Hebrews, the zealous Pharisee and disciple of Gamaliel, could not have thought or have expressed himself otherwise. More particularly the form under which the great doctrine of Justification by Faith is stated is clearly seen to be dependent upon ideas current at his time in Rabbinic circles. And even where St Paul varies from strictly Rabbinic modes of thought, the cause of variation can be generally traced back to definite Hellenistic influences which were at that time affecting Jewish thought. Hence the liberal believer must recognise that St Paul's system of thought was bound up with the thought of his day, and, as such, marks a transient phase in the development of religious thinking. But he does not rest in this discovery ; he is concerned with a spiritual fact of which this system was the temporal expression ; he pierces beneath the words and forms of thought to the soul of him who was once a persecutor, and then, through his wonderful conversion, became

the preacher of the faith which once he destroyed. Here there is revealed to him a sacred vision—peace of mind and confident sense of power gained through faith in Jesus Christ ; passionate devotion of love towards the Risen Saviour, who had manifested Himself to him ; absolute subjection of every impulse and aim to the loftiest ideals of service of God and man ; marvellous capacity for illuminating even the trivial details of life with the highest religious significance—all centering round and enlivened by a sense of direct dependence upon God and of inspiration by his Holy Spirit, whence all power, all love, all illumination, is consciously felt to proceed ; in short, a personality wherein the believer reverently recognises the chosen vessel of the Divine Spirit, through which comes now to him the inspired Word of God, not in the letter—that is, not in the mind of the Apostle, with all those temporal limitations which alienate it from the modern mind—but in the Spirit wherein St Paul was in communion with the Divine and Eternal.

And yet in the light of this perception the letter is also sacred to the liberal believer. St Paul's writings, St Paul's conceptions, St Paul's treatment of even the most trivial details of the life of his own days are the means whereby, through study and meditation, he is brought under the influence of a personality divinely inspired, wherein he receives authoritative spiritual guidance for his own life and belief.

But how is it with the central point of the Bible? What is the attitude of the liberal believer towards the story of the Gospels and towards Him of whom they speak? Here again modern inquiry has been and is at work; here again "the human element" has been brought clearly into light, and much of the supernatural glamour in which the picture of our Lord's life is presented in the Gospels seems to be due rather to the form which the actual events took in the minds of the narrators. The tendency of modern research is towards picturing the life of our Lord as above all a human

life, really human in all aspects, lived under the human limitations of knowledge and power and the national limitations of tradition and education. To the modern mind the very perfection of this life consisted in the sublime victory after real conflict, wherein human faith, hope, and love transcended the limitations of the environment whenever they tended to cramp the moral energy of the soul, wherein the traditional forms of national expectancy were made to become vehicles of a new spiritual Gospel. Such results of modern historical and critical investigation may be accepted by the liberal believer. The letter of the record in the Gospels in itself does not present to him absolute and eternal truth ; it is conditioned by the mental environment of the evangelists and by the human limitations under which the Life itself was lived ; yet behind the words and actions which are recorded there abides for him the mystery of the soul, the surpassing mystery of the personality of One who could not explain Himself to Himself otherwise than

under the Jewish conception of Messiah, of One who felt Himself to be the peculiar Son of God, the Lawgiver of the kingdom of God, about to come as the Divine Judge in the clouds of heaven. Here, again, the liberal believer is not so much concerned with the origin and value of these terms and conceptions, as with the fact that our Lord naturally used them to express His own self-consciousness. This fact, taken together with the testimony which the whole New Testament gives to the sense among our Lord's immediate followers of the unique character of His personality, abides as the basis of faith in the Divinity of our Lord. And though it must be allowed that, under the overpowering influence of such a faith, incidents of the Gospel story have suffered change in the course of transmission, even during the short period which elapsed before they were first committed to writing—a change which in the case of the tradition preserved in the Gospel of St John is so serious that it can no longer be regarded as a strictly

historical record of the life of our Lord—still, the liberal believer finds just in this Gospel of St John what is for him the supreme expression of the central truth of Christianity, that in the human life of Jesus of Nazareth mankind has received the personal revelation of God, that in Him we by faith see the Father.

But though the revelation is in the soul, in the personality of our Saviour, and only relatively and secondarily in the words and actions of His earthly life, still, the records of the Gospels are sacred to the liberal believer, because through them he rises to the knowledge of the principles, the inward motives of the perfect Life, and comes into communion with Him who is the absolute Lord of the soul.

Thus it is that the Bible is still a sacred book to the liberal believer. He still finds in it the revelation of the Divine Will, and the source of supreme spiritual help and enlightenment in his endeavour to perform that Will. It is to him what no other book can be. Not only does it contain the record of the origin

and development of his religion ; not only does it bring him to the fountain head, into touch with the times of primal fervour, but it comes to him with the authoritative recommendation of the conscience of universal Christendom through ages past. For though it is true that accident has played a subsidiary part in the formation of the Canon of Scripture, so that certain books of slight moral and religious value are included therein, still, the consciousness of the Christian Church has borne and still bears universal testimony that the Scriptures as a whole proceed from men peculiarly inspired by the Holy Ghost to enlighten and guide the souls of men. The liberal believer of to-day acknowledges his spiritual ancestry as his soul answers " Amen " to this testimony.

The Bible is indeed to the liberal believer of to-day really just what it was to his believing forefathers. To them it was a means by which their souls came into communion with God through the souls of inspired men ; so it is to him. Only, the way to the end was

easier in the past; our forefathers naturally sympathised with the forms of thought of the sacred writers receiving the spirit in the letter; to-day the way is more difficult: we must work behind the letter to the spirit. We have received gifts of knowledge and education that have changed our whole intellectual outlook; to us much has been given; of us more is required. Those very gifts of increased knowledge and wider outlook, wherein we are superior to our forefathers, must be devoted to the study of the Scriptures; we must by strenuous intellectual effort bring ourselves into touch with the environment and into sympathy with the thought of the sacred writers, before soul can commune with soul, and spirit inspire spirit; before we can receive to the full the revelation of the Divine Will as a lantern to our feet and a light to our paths amid the difficulties and temptations of our modern life.

We have pointed out a real defect in the

general attitude of our people towards the Bible, and we have indicated what we firmly believe to be the only method for removing it. The defect we would urge is not only mischievous in that it tends to place the Bible out of touch with the actual life and thought of to-day, but it is also dangerous to the cause of true religion. A faith which is based upon those points, wherein Bible history differs from the actual life of to-day and the thought of the sacred writers differs from the educated thought of our times, is defenceless against the attacks of those who advance the results of Biblical criticism in a spirit hostile to the Christian Creed. We must remember that it is in this spirit that these results are nowadays presented in newspapers to thousands of our intelligent working men, and that the attack is dangerous and so difficult to repel simply because our people have not been taught to realise that these modern discoveries and theories do not touch the fortress of the Faith; that all those old views concerning the Bible

which are overthrown by modern scientific research are really immaterial, and that the fundamental truth of the Bible ever remains where man cannot reach with all the searching of his intellect, but only in the spirit of humble, trustful faith.

We plead, therefore, for the acceptance of the attitude of Biblical Liberalism in the interest of true religion; we plead for the recognition of honest, fearlessly scientific study of the Bible as the true friend of the Faith. We implore our brethren in the ministry, and more especially those preparing for the ministry, to take up with courage the intellectual burden which must be borne for the sake of Christ's flock in these later days. Why should we fear as we put our hand to it? We start with the obvious fact, plain upon the very surface of the Bible, that the authors of its books—prophets, evangelists, apostles—were men of God, in conscious communion with God, and convinced that they had a message to deliver to mankind. We would share their

faith and know their message. We use all the powers of our mind to gain the knowledge which will bring us into the closest possible touch with the actual environment of these holy men, not in order that we may become better historians of their times, but that we may know their souls. If this aim be the star that guides us, the way may be distressful, but the goal is assured ; we know that with them we shall be brought to the feet of our God and Saviour.

# DEVOTIONAL LIBERALISM

BY

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PUBLIC worship is intended to foster the aspirations of men towards a common life, the spring of which is sympathy and its activity co-operation. The function of public worship is to provide for all sorts and conditions of worshippers a common medium for the expression of the desires and feelings of the soul. It takes for granted that there is an underlying unity that links the worshippers together and also each and all of them to the common object of their worship.

At the present moment there are clear enough signs of decaying interest in current modes and forms of public worship. The prime cause of this is that these forms are not

adapted to present needs. Men have grown out of them. They no longer fit. They require revision. Such revision has for long been talked of; the time for its fulfilment is ripe. There is no need to dilate upon the harm the Church will suffer if, for lack of readiness to consult its own best interest, it should lose the sympathy and help of large numbers of intelligent and spiritually minded members.

The Book of Common Prayer is the national book of devotions that is in our hands. Since it was drawn up various organised Christian Churches have grown out of the parent stem into distinct branches. Each of these represents some aspect of the religious life of the nation; but the Prayer Book has come to be generally regarded as belonging exclusively to the Church of England. It has ceased to be in common use amongst all Christian communities, and though originally intended as a bond of union, has unfortunately at times been used as a weapon of exclusiveness. The

value of the Prayer Book is generally admitted, not only as a historical document preserving the evidence of continuity of worship down the ages, but also as containing prayers of unmatched dignity and force. Its worth should be measured by its power to fulfil the object for which it exists. To value it for its own sake, apart from its use, is to make it a mere fetish. There is a strong tendency to do this amongst a section of Church people. The compilers however, who in their day did their work so well, evidently did not regard it as fixed in form for all time, but anticipated its adaptation to meet the requirements of succeeding ages. "The particular forms of Divine Worship," they say in the Preface to the book, "and the Rites and Ceremonies appointed to be used therein, being things in their own nature indifferent, and alterable, and so acknowledged ; it is but reasonable that, upon weighty and important considerations, according to the various exigencies of times and occasions, such changes and alterations should be made therein,

as to those that are in place of authority should from time to time seem either necessary or expedient."

It is both necessary and expedient that the spirit of comprehensiveness which called the Prayer Book forth should be at all times maintained. The book is intended to cover ground that is common to all types of Christian worshippers, and ought never to be captured as the exclusive possession of any one section.

We pass now to the immediate object of this paper, and suggest by various instances the lines along which revision in the order of services would seem to be most practicable. The adoption of them would, as we believe, remove many serious hindrances to free and intelligent fellowship in common worship. It will be generally admitted that, for adults at any rate, there is no religious value in church-going unless it be a voluntary and whole-hearted act, and that the principles of edification and sound sense should be allowed to have free

course in the adjustment of forms of worship to modern needs.

1. We suggest as desirable that the Exhortations which are frequent in the various services should be either omitted or shortened. They lengthen the services unduly, and are scarcely attended to. There is now no need for them. The purpose and meaning of the services ought to be always clear enough to explain themselves. The worshipper is distracted rather than helped if he is told from time to time what he ought to be thinking and feeling. He would prefer to let the service make its own impression in its own way upon his heart and mind. Moreover, there is in the sermon a place specially provided for exhortation. The longer exhortations in the Holy Communion Service are, with general consent, almost invariably omitted; that at the opening of morning and evening prayer is often either omitted or curtailed. Again, the language of the exhortation that opens the marriage service is offensive to most; while in some cases, as for

instance in the Order of Public Baptism for infants, doctrines are implied which by many are no longer believed in.

2. The use of the "Athanasian Creed" should no longer be compulsory. Its public recitation serves no devotional purpose, and a large number of Church people are offended by its use. In an increasing number of churches its use is being discontinued. The apologists for its compulsory retention usually attempt to explain it in a non-natural sense. This is one of the strongest arguments for its discontinuance. It is of first importance that the language of devotion should be as plain and clear as possible, so as to eliminate as far as may be the need of mental reservation.

3. Many of the repetitions in the services as they now stand would with great advantage be avoided. When the Lord's Prayer is first said it is heartily repeated, but further recitation of it during the same service tends to become mechanical and formal. Again, in versicle and petition the King is too frequently

mentioned, and thus prayers for him lose their force. It is often replied to this that the King is prayed for as representing the nation. This is quite true; and the answer is that it would be far better to pray directly for the nation, and in this, as in other instances, to allow words to speak for themselves. Again, it sometimes happens that two creeds are said at the same service. It would seem to be advisable (so long as creeds are used in public worship) that there should be only one recitation at any one particular service. It is of historical interest to know that repetitions arise from the linking of two or more offices into one, but for purposes of public devotion the unitary effect of each service should be the one object of consideration.

4. Liberty in the use of the Psalter is greatly to be desired. Some of the Psalms, such as the 109th, and parts of others, are not only unedifying, but distinctly outrage Christian sentiment and teaching. These might well be omitted, and a new arrangement of the Psalms

be made, having regard to their contents, to the fitness of their juxtaposition, and to the appropriateness of their use for morning or evening.

5. A fresh selection of Old Testament lessons for Sundays would add greatly to the effectiveness of the services. When we hear passages from the Bible read aloud we are often awakened to a grandeur and force in them which escapes us in private reading. As the occasions of thus hearing them are comparatively rare, they would be used to greater gain if passages from the Prophets and the Wisdom Literature were substituted for some of the lessons as at present ordered.

6. In the Holy Communion Service the two Commandments as quoted in the New Testament or the Beatitudes might well be used as alternatives to the Ten Commandments. The latter may be useful for private self-examination in view of preparation for Holy Communion, and no doubt it is in this connection that they hold their present place. Their

negative form, however, is not consonant with the Eucharistic service, and they contain some statements which we no longer accept in their literal sense.

7. The first part of the Communion service probably finds few apologists for its continued use. The "denouncing of God's anger and judgments against sinners" has no place in Christian ministry, and the whole tone of the exhortation is out of touch with our beliefs to-day. The sense of the worth and dignity of man which dominates us now we feel to be the true basis of all Christian teaching. It transcends and is disintegrating all teaching that is based on his shortcomings and defects, and that regards as irremediable his perversions of will. It is just here that we touch the central principle that is working dissatisfaction with an unreformed Liturgy and that makes it imperative to adapt it to our present aspirations, if it is to contain a genuine expression of our beliefs. The whole world of thought to-day, the whole horizon of life is

other than that out of which the Prayer Book came. It is not native to us now to bemoan "the miseries of this sinful world"; the God whom we worship now is not one that has to be persuaded to be attentive to our needs, nor propitiated by us in order that His favour may be won. Rather is it to religion that we look to sanction our search into all natural things, in the belief and hope that everything is a part of our Father's House.

8. In the Form and Manner of Making of Deacons it would be advisable to alter the question as it now stands: "Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament?" and to make it "Do you believe that Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to Salvation?" This is in accordance with the Form of the Ordering of Priests. An alteration of the kind that takes cognisance of the fact that the verbal inspiration of the Bible is no longer believed in would help to remove one of the hindrances that pre-

vents some from taking Holy Orders, whose entrance into the ministry would be to the nation's great gain.

9. In the Burial Office an alternative Form of Service for the burial of young children would be greatly appreciated. One such Form was privately printed some years ago, and has been used on several occasions to the comfort of mourners.

10. Many of the "Prayers and Thanksgivings upon several occasions" are at present never used. Such facts as our modern attitude towards nature, the encouragement of the study of hygienic and similar sciences as part of our national education, and our aspirations towards international harmony, make it necessary that the language of some of them should be altered. There are also many additions that would be valuable.

The activities of Church life are now manifold. Prayers for such objects as Home and Foreign Missions, Religious Education, Hospitals, Philanthropic Institutions, Prisons,

and the like, would emphasise the fact that, on occasions, common interests are astir in the minds and hearts of the worshippers, the expression of which would give greater reality to the Services.

Such are some of the main alterations that would materially affect the value of the Prayer Book, and would help to put new life into the Services of the Church. The demand is for nothing revolutionary, but for greater liberty, and for a wise trust in the discretion of congregations to adapt the Prayer Book to the type of service that suits each best. At present no one professes to keep the letter of the Rubrics, yet they are of equal authority; there is nothing in the nature of the case to make some more imperative than others. In short, the Act of Uniformity is out of date. It is time that this were recognised. Then unhappy strifes about Rubrics would cease to exist. The Church would be free to rise towards the fulfilment of its true mission, and to witness that in the spiritual

order unity of purpose ever manifests itself in variety of expression.

The main principle at issue is that forms are made for man, not man for forms. The human spirit is greater than any of its expressions, and itself creates the channels for its own outflow. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such does the Father seek to be His worshippers."

# CLERICAL LIBERALISM

BY

THE REV. DR RASHDALL

THERE has always been in the Church of England a party which used to be described as Latitudinarian, but which in modern language would be described as Liberal. By a Latitudinarian party is or was meant a party which took up an intermediate position between the more Catholic and the more Calvinistic sections of the English Church, which was disposed to make comparatively little of the points about which Christians disagreed, to claim a large measure of liberty in thought and in expression for both clergy and laity, and consequently to advocate a free interpretation of the formulæ by which at any given time members of the

Church were bound. Of the men who inspired the Reformation in the sixteenth century many might certainly be described as Latitudinarians in this sense—to say nothing of Erasmus (to whom Warham offered an English benefice), Dean Colet, and others before the breach with Rome. A school more definitely approximating to Modern Liberalism is to be found in the seventeenth century, or rather two schools—the Cambridge Platonists, whose attitude to non-Christian thought, and whose views about free-will and predestination, were hard enough to reconcile with either the letter or the spirit of the Thirty-nine Articles; and, on the other hand, men like Chillingworth and Jeremy Taylor, whose Liberalism was based rather upon a vast acquaintance with the history—and consequently with the variations and uncertainties—of dogma in the past than upon a philosophical attitude towards creeds and dogmas in general. Chillingworth was long prevented from taking holy orders by scruples about the Athanasian Creed, and would cer-

tainly have been glad to get rid of it altogether. Jeremy Taylor's desire to include in the membership of the Church, and apparently in its ministry, all who accepted the Apostle's Creed went beyond the widest limits of comprehension which now, two centuries and a half later, commend themselves to those who are most fond of appealing to the authority of the Anglican Fathers. In the person of Tillotson a questioner of everlasting punishment—often described by opponents as a “Deist”—mounted the throne of St Augustine. As the eighteenth century progressed, a certain kind of Latitudinarianism became, it may almost be said, the dominant tone of the Church of England. It was for preaching the doctrine of justification by faith, precisely in the way in which it is defined in the Articles, that John Wesley found pulpit after pulpit in his own Church closed against him: while before its revival by Keble and Newman, the high Anglican doctrine favoured by one side of our formulæ was commonly supposed to have “gone out

with the non-jurors." The Athanasian Creed was probably omitted more frequently then than now. It may safely be said that there has been no period in the history of the Church of England up to the days of the Oxford Movement at which there have not been thousands of the clergy who could only justify their position in its ranks by taking in a very loose and liberal sense some part or side of the authorised formulæ.

The Oxford Movement itself, while it introduced a tendency towards the exaltation of dogma and dogmatic accuracy which had been foreign to the prevailing spirit of the Church of England at least for the preceding century and a half, only added to the divergence between the actual opinions of the clergy and the formulæ which they subscribed. One of the most characteristic *Tracts for the Times* advocated a method of interpretation designed to reconcile with the letter of the Thirty-nine Articles precisely those doctrines of the Roman Church against which it is admitted

that they were, in the minds of their framers, intended to guard.

Liberalism, then, is no new thing in the Church of England. The claim of the clergy to interpret very freely—often in a sense notoriously opposed to the meaning of their framers—large portions of the Church's formulæ can only be refused on a principle which involves the imputation of “dishonesty” to, it may be almost said, a majority among the clergy from the days of the Reformation down to the present, including the most famous and revered leaders of every school of thought. In one respect, however, the Liberalism of the present day differs from that of all previous periods. The part of the authorised standards about which the old Latitudinarians found the least difficulty was the actual text of Scripture. They were more or less aware of the apparent inconsistencies and contradictions to be found in Scripture—even in the New Testament. They were aware how far the Creeds and Articles had gone, in the settlement of disputed

questions, beyond what could really be proved by the authority of the sacred writers. They were consequently indisposed to define where the Bible had not defined, or to erect great systems of doctrine upon the basis of chance expressions or isolated texts, obscure passages or passages apparently contradicted by other passages. Occasionally they might even throw out hints which pointed to differences in certainty or authority between one part of the Scriptures and another. But it was just the most liberal-minded of the older Divines who would have been most ready to "subscribe" the actual text of Scripture if they could only be dispensed from subscribing elaborate definitions like the Athanasian Creed, or Articles which, as they were aware, represented but a fleeting and compromising phase of theological opinion.

The distinctive note of the Liberalism which began to appear about the middle of the nineteenth century was that it is the actual letter of the Bible itself which it claims to

interpret in a liberal manner. It is the virtually new science of historical criticism that has created the phase of theological opinion which is usually understood by the word Liberalism at the present day. It is unnecessary here to analyse the intellectual influences which have led to this new attitude towards the Bible. Closer study of the Scriptures themselves has gone hand in hand with wider knowledge and closer study of other religions, other sacred books, other ancient writings of all kinds. Thomas Arnold once expressed the wish that some one should do for the Old Testament what Niebuhr had done for Roman History. Arnold's aspiration has been abundantly satisfied by the labours of Ewald, Graf, Kuenen, Wellhausen, and a host of other inquirers. The result has been not unlike the result of Niebuhr's labours upon Roman History. No competent scholar now claims for the Pentateuch a more historical character than Niebuhr allowed for the earlier parts of Livy; or claims for the

historical books in general any greater immunity from error in detail, from the distorting influences of theological or national prejudice, than can be claimed for the ancient chronicles of other peoples. And, when we turn to the religious ideas of the books, it is now admitted on all hands that the Old Testament exhibits a gradual evolution from the polytheistic religion and the crude ethics of a barbarous tribe to the purest Monotheism and the loftiest ethical standard known to the pre-Christian world. Nor has this critical attitude towards the Old Testament been without its influence upon our ideas about the New. Competent scholars may differ considerably as to the measure of change which the critical study of the New Testament writings has necessitated in traditional views as to date, authorship, and historical credibility; but, while no sober critic supposes that our confidence in the historical character of the New Testament has been shaken to anything like the extent which has been the case with

regard, for instance, to the Pentateuch or the Book of Daniel, no one will any longer assert that the Gospels are wholly free from error in detail, or defend the view of Inspiration which was common among Christians of all schools a century ago. But I will not go on describing a change of opinion with which everyone is familiar. What I am concerned with here is the bearing of these changes in the theological situation upon the position of Liberals in the Church of England.

It is obvious that in an essay like the present it will be quite impossible to argue in favour of any particular theological position. I shall not attempt to discuss whether each or all of the opinions commonly described as liberal are true, or whether their propagation is desirable. I must assume that we are agreed (1) that considerable changes are necessary in the old-fashioned ideas about the truth, authority, and inspiration of Scripture—particularly, though not exclusively, of the Old Testament; (2) that it is desirable that the

clergy should study the questions to which their altered attitude towards Scripture inevitably gives rise; and (3) that the position of a clergyman should not be closed to those who arrive, whether before or after ordination, at what are commonly called the more advanced results on such questions. I write from the point of view of a Liberal in Theology, and what I write is not likely to appeal to any who are not already more or less of the same mind. The questions which I propose to discuss are: (i.) the justifiability of a liberal position in a clergyman who is required, as the condition of his ordination, to subscribe certain formulæ; (ii.) the limits of permissible latitude in the interpretations of such formulæ; and (iii.) the prospects of theological Liberalism in the Church of England.

(i.) The principle upon which a man is justified in subscribing or using a formula which does not, understood in the natural and literal sense, represent the actual state of his belief, is mainly, I take it, this—that for such pur-

poses words must be taken to mean what they are generally understood to mean. When a modern man takes the oath of allegiance, he certainly does not intend to do all the things which "allegiance" would have been held to mean by a Tudor king or a Tudor parliament or the general opinion of that epoch: but nobody supposes that he does, and therefore he is not guilty of perjury or lying or dishonesty when he takes the oath. Few people will accuse of dishonesty a radical member who takes the oath, though he would be prepared, under certain circumstances, to join in the forcible establishment of a Republic. Nor, even when the first or the second Act of Uniformity was passed, was it the intention of King or Parliament to exclude from the ministry of the Church of England all who, if they had thought the matter out for themselves, would have arrived at conclusions about the relation between faith and works, or about the Eucharist or Baptism, more or less at variance with the Articles. The most that was required

was that they should be silent about such differences. The inevitable progress of theological opinion practically extended the limits generally recognised as compatible with honesty long before the growth of modern Liberalism.

The older Latitudinarians had, as we have seen, little difficulty or reservation in declaring their belief in the Bible. And the terms used in assenting to the Bible are much stronger and more unambiguous than any now employed—at least since 1865, when the present declaration of Assent was substituted for a much stronger one—with regard to the Prayer Book or Articles of Religion. The candidate for Ordination is still required to say, “I unfeignedly believe the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.” That is a very much stronger and more personal declaration of belief than the vague “I assent to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion and to the Book of Common Prayer . . . I believe the doctrine of the Church of England as therein set forth

to be agreeable to the Word of God." And if, in the early days of Biblical Criticism, any one had scrupled to take the first pledge, though he might have found no difficulty with the second, he would have much to say for himself. He might certainly have alleged that public opinion did not understand a candidate for Orders to pledge himself to any exact agreement with the more Calvinistic Articles or with the stronger sacramental implications of the Communion and Baptismal offices : but that there was no such general agreement that a man might announce belief in all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, although he regarded the early chapters of Genesis as mythical and the book of Daniel as a work of fiction. A pupil of Dr Arnold's, who had been struck by the applicability of Niebuhr's doubts to early Hebrew History, might well have felt such a difficulty about enlarging the limits of permissible latitude in interpretation. But at the present day such a line can hardly be taken

by the advocate of strict subscription. For it is precisely about the Bible that the need for latitude is most generally felt. There is no instructed clergyman of the present day who really believes every word of the Old and New Testaments—which would be the obvious and *prima facie* meaning of “I unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.” There is scarcely to be found a learned, or even an instructed, clergyman under (say) sixty years of age who does not recognise that large portions of the Old Testament are unhistorical, that the Second Petrine Epistle is or may be pseudonymous, that there are in the Gospels discrepant versions of our Lord’s acts and sayings which cannot all be true. These things are now admitted by the very zealots of Orthodoxy—by those who most loudly clamour for the silencing of other opinions of which they disapprove. It will suffice to quote a few of the things which have been said about the Bible by the Bishop who has most strenuously and constantly in-

sisted upon a strict interpretation of clerical obligations in this matter.

“Their highest praise,” says the Bishop of Birmingham, in reference to the Old Testament Scriptures, “is that we now see them to be defective” (*Lux Mundi*, 1st ed., p. 330). “Various are the degrees of this inspiration” (p. 342). “There is a profound air of historical truthfulness pervading the Old Testament record from Abraham downwards”; not, it is implied, before Abraham (p. 351). “Thus the Church cannot insist upon the historical character of the earliest records as she can on the historical characters of the Gospels or the Acts” (p. 352). “Criticism distinguishes distinct stages in the growth of the law of worship,” *i.e.* Moses did not say things which the Bible says he did say. “The book of Wisdom . . . professes to be written by Solomon, but is certainly not written by him” (p. 353). Finally, the writer asks whether the earlier narratives of Genesis are not “of the nature of myth” (p. 357). All

this is very attenuated criticism, but it is enough for our purpose.

We all remember the storm of opposition which these mild utterances provoked in 1889. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the services which the Bishop of Birmingham has rendered to the liberal cause by his courage in avowing what, by that time, almost all serious scholars thought, and by the toleration which his influence has won for such views. But it does not lie in the mouth of such a prelate to accuse of dishonesty those who disbelieve other historical events which are no less and no more contained in the "Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments" than those which he doubts. Much stronger denials of facts or doctrines contained in the Old and New Testament could, of course, be quoted from the writings of the late Archbishop Temple, of Bishop Moorhouse (late of Manchester), of the present Bishop of Winchester, of prelates, Divinity Professors and private scholars without number, men who have risen

to high positions in the Church with general approval, and whom scarcely anyone accuses even of grave unorthodoxy, to say nothing of dishonesty. The public opinion which approves of such men retaining the positions for which they have qualified by asserting their belief in all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and assenting to the Prayer Book and Articles, must be taken to have sanctioned the interpretation of the Bible, the Ordination declaration of belief in it, and the declaration of assent in a very liberal and non-natural sense. It cannot be said that a candidate for Orders is guilty of deception or dishonesty because he disbelieves (in their obvious sense) one part of the formularies, when the public in general knows very well that his own Metropolitan, his own Bishop, his Vicar, and the authorised instructor who taught him theology disbelieve the same or other portions of them, and acquiesces in their doing so.

(ii.) "But," it will be said, "granting that

there is a general consent to allow of some latitude in the interpretation of these formularies, are there to be no limits to such a latitude? Granted that Subscription does not mean what the words literally suggest, do they mean nothing at all? Is there no 'doctrine of the Church of England' to which a candidate for orders may reasonably be held to pledge himself?" I answer "Certainly, there must be limits": and I think I shall carry with me a general consent if I add: "What a candidate for Orders must be taken to pledge himself to is the essential doctrines of Christianity, as understood by the Church to whose ministry he aspires." The real difficulty arises when we proceed to ask: "What are essential and what are unessential doctrines?" Attempts will be made in various quarters to substitute some other rigid, external test for that requirement of literal belief in every word contained in Bible, Prayer Book, and Articles which is admitted to be at the present day an excessive and impossible requirement. The most popu-

lar attempt to substitute another external test for the one which has been abandoned by tacit and universal consent puts the creeds in the place of the Bible and the Articles. Now I am far from denying that the creeds—not on account of any difference in the terms in which the clergyman assents to them—but because of the position which they practically hold in the worship, the theological belief, and the religious life of the great mass of Churchmen have a claim to respect greater than the vast mass of historical facts and often inconsistent ideas contained in various parts of the Old and New Testaments. The great majority of instructed Churchmen will admit, without a moment's hesitation, that there are some things in Scripture which they do not believe and do not expect others to believe: as to the Articles, they are seldom mentioned without derision and contempt by the very party in the Church of England which professes the fiercest zeal for dogmatic orthodoxy. But the average Churchman is less easily brought to admit that there

is anything in the creeds which he disbelieves. And yet even here cross-examination will probably reveal a considerable amount of more or less unconscious liberalising, allegorising, minimising, or other attempt to accommodate the ideas of the present to the radically different beliefs of a previous age. In the first place there is the Athanasian Creed, which declares that not merely unbelievers and Unitarians, but all believers in Monophysitism, Apollinarianism which was imputed to St Cyril and now has adherents among those who think themselves most orthodox, or Nestorianism (a leaning to which school has been freely and plausibly attributed to some of our most dogmatic divines), are doomed to everlasting flames. I doubt if there is a Bishop in the Anglican Communion who really believes that appalling doctrine, without some kind or other of reservation quite unauthorised by the text of the creed or the actual meaning of those who put it there. Here, again, I may appeal to the authority of the Bishop

of Birmingham, who has expressly admitted that these clauses go slightly beyond the real mind of the Church. Yet the Church of England attributes to the Nicene and Apostles' creeds no authority which it does not attribute to the Athanasian. All three "ought thoroughly to be received and believed." But even in the two less elaborate creeds there are clauses which many reputedly orthodox persons can only assent to with a good deal of what, when used by more advanced Liberals, is described as "strained," "non-natural," or even "disingenuous" interpretation. Few modern theologians, in declaring their belief in the "descent into Hell," believe in that literal preaching by the disembodied spirit of Christ to the spirits in a local Hades during the interval between His death and His Resurrection, which was certainly meant by the Fathers and the early Church when they inserted that clause in the creed. Few would be prepared to say that any one who puts upon the idea of Christ's coming "to judge both the quick and the

dead" the meaning which Maurice and Kingsley put upon it has no right to remain clergymen of the Church of England. And yet the interpretation which dissolves the coming in judgement into a gradual process which is even now taking place in the events of the world's history can hardly be called a literal interpretation. If it is asserted that these are not "essential doctrines," it may be replied that that is a matter of private opinion: and that there are many who regard such doctrines as the Virgin Birth of our Lord and His bodily Resurrection (not in the sense of a vision which historically occurred to the disciples, but in the sense of a literal reanimation of the body placed in the tomb) as no more essential to Christianity than the other matters, no less unhesitatingly asserted by the creeds, about which liberty of interpretation is practically conceded. There is no intelligible principle of interpretation according to which the belief in the everlasting punishment of heretics, in the descent into Hell, in the future coming of Christ, in the Resurrection of the

body, can be mitigated or spiritualised, which will not equally permit us to take the word "Virgin" to mean a young woman, or to understand by "He rose again from the dead" a vision of the risen and immortal Christ. It is impossible here to discuss the actual truth or the importance of these beliefs. It is open, of course, to anyone to contend that the toleration of the one set of opinions is, in his private opinion, desirable in the best interests of the Church, while that of the other set is undesirable. What is not open to any man of common intellectual consistency or common moral honesty is to accuse the one kind of non-literal interpretation of dishonesty while he claims for himself, or concedes to his friends, the other instances of non-literal interpretation.

But, I shall now be asked—it may be in some quarters with growing irritation and indignation—"How far is this to go? Where do you put the limits of permissible toleration? If these historical statements may be explained away, why not the more distinctly doctrinal

statements? If the bodily Resurrection, why not every form of historical Resurrection? If the Virgin Birth, why not the Incarnation, the Divinity of Christ, the Holy Trinity?" I admit that, so long as the matter is treated as a question of "honesty" or "veracity," it might be difficult to distinguish between the "explanations" or "interpretations" which everybody allows and others which would leave standing very little of what any average person would recognise as the Christian Religion. We have all—High Churchmen, Low Churchmen, Broad Churchmen, moderate Liberals and extreme Liberals—gone too far to have any basis for accusing one another of "dishonesty." The only people who ought really to be accused of at least intellectual "dishonesty" are those clergymen who pretend that they are themselves honest and everybody else dishonest. But the practical question is not now one of honesty, but of spiritual expediency. I should be very sorry to draw up a list of the opinions which could not

“honestly” be held by a clergyman of the Church of England. But I could mention many opinions which would make it extremely undesirable for a man to become a clergyman of the Church of England in the interests of that Church itself, of his own religious life, and of the community generally.

But, it will be asked, “Who is to be the judge of this spiritual expediency?” I answer, “Primarily, each man must judge for himself.” But I will add that, in making his decision, he will do well to pay regard to the actual state of religious opinion in the community which he proposes to serve, and particularly (if he feels any doubt) to the judgement of the Bishop from whom he seeks ordination. It is not the Thirty-nine Articles or the Declaration of Assent which create the practical difficulty, but the actual opinions of Churchmen. Many congregations would be far more likely to be shocked and scandalised—far more likely to talk about dishonesty and unfaithfulness to ordination vows—if a clergyman taught what

is actually contained in the Articles and some of the Homilies than if he taught many things which they condemn. I do not mean, of course, that an intending clergyman must simply make the present opinions of average Churchmen into his really operative standard of doctrine. That would involve the negation of all progress, of all intellectual honesty, of the very idea of a teaching ministry. I mean that there is a degree of incompatibility between the individual's opinions and the dominant opinion of a religious society which makes his ministry in that communion quite possible and spiritually advantageous, and there is a degree which is inconsistent with it. In the Church of England the compulsory use of the Prayer Book and the Creeds still further limits the range of expedient latitude. A man may quite well use a Creed and a Liturgy in which there are occasional expressions which he has to explain in a non-natural way, or which grate upon his feelings. There are few thoughtful clergymen—High, Low, or Broad—who would

not admit that there are particular prayers, sentences, perhaps whole services which they would like to alter considerably. At least a third of the clergy would be very glad to change the present Communion Office for that of the first Prayer Book of Edward VI. Strong Evangelicals dislike the Baptismal Office. Broad Church clergymen and nearly all laymen dislike the Athanasian Creed. Most of us would like to make some changes in the Marriage Service, in the adulatory State Prayers, in the proper Preface for Whitsunday. But it is generally admitted that it would be unreasonable to leave the Church of England on account of such differences as these; such a degree of discrepancy between private feeling and official profession is no greater than in a Church with no liturgy and no doctrinal standards there must constantly and habitually be between the language of the minister's extempore prayer or the hymn of his choosing and the private feelings and beliefs of the worshipper. But it is clear that no man can profitably

minister in a Church in which there is not a large body of common belief, feeling, and aspiration between himself and the religious community—at least, some considerable part of the community—whose devotions he leads, whom he instructs from the pulpit, whose moral and religious life he endeavours to stimulate and to guide.

What are the limits of permissible or desirable latitude of belief among the clergy, it is difficult to define with any exactitude. Opinions change from day to day: opinions which twenty years ago would have caused a clergyman to be looked upon as an extreme Broad Churchman are now regarded as compatible not merely with high office in the Church, but with a high repute for orthodoxy. It is well known that some years ago Bishop Wilberforce nearly refused to ordain, on account of his views about the Old Testament, a fellow of a College, who is now universally respected as a “moderate” Theologian. A decade or so later another young fellow of a

college had an equally near escape from rejection under Wilberforce's successor: he is now the most influential High Church Bishop of our day. So little is it possible to foresee the theological future. I do not think it possible to define with accuracy the exact beliefs which qualify or disqualify for the ministry of the Church of England: so much depends upon the tone of thought and feeling. The responsibility must rest with the individual who applies for orders, and with the individual Bishop who ordains. Of two men who hold substantially the same opinions one may feel himself essentially in sympathy with the Church of England, may delight in its services, may believe in its future, and be happy and useful in its ministry; while another may be so much irritated and estranged by the dominance not so much of mere ignorance and bigotry as of a petty and fussy ecclesiasticism among the clergy that he will be happier and more useful in some other profession or some other ministry. I do not think

it possible to lay down any definite, hard and fast rule: but for fear of misunderstanding, I would say that I do not myself wish to see the ministry of the Church of England made accessible to persons who do not believe in Theism and human immortality, and who do not recognise the unique and paramount character of the Christian revelation in a sense which makes it possible for them, without a feeling of unreality, to use the ordinary language of the Church about the Divinity of our Lord. But I am quite aware that such definitions as these are no less patient of many interpretations than the actual phrases of the Creeds or Articles. There are, for instance, theologians enjoying a high reputation for Orthodoxy whose creed seems to me to approximate to Pantheism rather than to Theism: but I have no desire to exclude such persons from the ministry of the Church so long as they do not feel, as I personally do feel, the incompatibility between the language which they use in their speculative moments

and the language which ordinary Christians and Theists have been in the habit of using towards and about God. The varieties of individual thought and feeling are so infinite that hard and fast definitions are impossible:

ἐν τῇ αἰσθήσει ἡ κρίσις.

I may add that the latitude already recognised by the courts seems fully to warrant all the toleration for which I contend: and those who most strenuously insist upon comparing clerical subscription to a commercial contract by which a man pledges himself to teach certain dogmas in return for a certain salary, must admit the authority of the courts to determine what that contract means. I will say nothing of the judgement in the Gorham case, which allowed the denial of "Baptismal regeneration," and in the Bennett case, which tolerated language about the "real Presence" equally inconsistent with the obvious and *prima facie* meaning of various statements in the Prayer Book and Articles. I will only call attention to the fact that in the case of Dr

Rowland Williams and Henry Bristow Wilson it was decided that it is not inconsistent with the teaching of the Church of England :

- (1) To deny that all parts of the Bible are inspired ; to deny that the Bible as a whole is the word of God, or to speak of Holy Scriptures as “an expression of devout reason” or as “the written voice of the congregation,” or to maintain that the writers of the Old Testament were fallible.
- (2) To speak of the idea of “merit by transfer” as a fiction and to hold that justification by faith means “the peace of mind or sense of Divine approval which comes of trust in a righteous God.”
- (3) To express a hope that the punishment of the wicked is not everlasting.

The principles of interpretations which can reconcile these doctrines with the plain language of the Ordinal, of the Articles, and of the Athanasian Creed, are principles under which, if logically and impartially applied, no Liberal

for whose presence among the clergy of the Church this essay is an apology need fear condemnation. And it is only by such principles of interpretation, and by acknowledging the authority of the tribunal which acts upon them, that any decided High Churchman or any decided Evangelical can justify his position in the Church of England after the distinctive tenets of each had been condemned by the ecclesiastical judge.

(iii.) So far, I have merely pleaded for toleration of the opinions commonly called "liberal" in the ministry of the Church of England. But, it may be asked, what are the prospects of Liberal Theology in that Church? The widest and truest sense of the term, Liberalism, as I understand it, expresses a general attitude of mind towards theology rather than a definite set of opinions. It represents the attitude of those who are anxious that religious knowledge and religious ideas shall keep pace with the advance of other kinds of knowledge, and who recognise that

large re-interpretations, restatements—nay, reconstructions—of theological belief are necessary if Christian belief is to be placed in harmony with the results of modern science, modern criticism, and modern philosophy. No doubt, when the matter is put in that way, it may well be suggested that in that sense we are all Liberals now—all educated and reflecting persons at least. That such is the case is, indeed, just what I want to contend. But for my present purpose it is impossible to avoid using the term as the designation of a particular school of opinion. By Liberalism in the more distinctive or party sense I mean simply the view of those who go somewhat beyond average clerical opinion in their demand for this kind of re-construction. What, then, are the prospects of Liberalism, so understood, in the Church of England; or rather (since my subject is Clerical Liberalism) what are the prospects of its growing and prevailing among the clergy of that Church?

There can be no doubt that the advance

of liberal opinions goes on with rapid strides. Critical opinions about the Bible are spreading among those of the younger clergy—I am afraid they are hardly the majority—who read and think at all seriously. The Old Testament has almost ceased to be even a difficulty. Any critical opinion about the authorship, the date, or even the historicity of its books expressed with moderation and reverence, may be privately or publicly avowed without much obloquy—almost anywhere but in the pulpit. It is even permissible—in most, if not all, clerical circles—to express great deference for Biblical Criticism in general. Nor is it definitely denied that the methods which have proved so successful in unravelling the problem of the Old Testament may legitimately be applied to the New. And even when we come to particular results of criticism, progress is being made. The composite character of the Synoptic Gospels—the existence of different strata in their narrative—is never denied; in short, the critical and historical way of looking at the Gospels is spread-

ing. The Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel is more and more being treated as an open question. Ideas of this kind grow apace. 1725 of the clergy recently signed a declaration which expressed the "desire that, as many of the clergy have already, with advantage to Christian faith and with a general assent on the part of their rulers, welcomed important results of a patient, reverent, and progressive criticism of the Old Testament, so the clergy, as Christian teachers, may now receive authoritative encouragement to face the critical problems of the New Testament with entire candour." That declaration would doubtless have been signed by thousands more but for the industriously propagated suggestion that the declaration really meant more than its actual words conveyed. But, for all this, I am far from looking at the present intellectual tone of the Church of England with any approach to optimism. Only to a very small extent is the change of attitude in the clergy revealed in

their pulpit teaching. The laity know what the clergy preach; they do not know what they think. And what is preached more and more fails to appeal to the lay mind. The alienation in thought and feeling between laity and clergy advances more rapidly than the education and enlightenment of the clergy. Moreover, though criticism may be in a general way tolerated or even approved, the line is very sharply drawn, the moment criticism threatens to conflict with established dogmas. There is, indeed, a much larger number of decided Liberals among the clergy than is commonly suspected. They number hundreds, if not thousands; and their number grows daily. Even the majority are becoming more and more critical, or at best tolerant of criticism. But after all, the dominant tone of clerical opinion compounds for liberality (or at least silence and vagueness) about critical questions by increased and exaggerated emphasis upon the creeds—the creeds interpreted in a literal and traditional manner—and also upon a body of

sacramental and sacerdotal dogma which is not to be found in any of the Church's formulæ. Even where there is some considerable liberality of thought, a sacerdotal tone remains, which repels the average layman far more than critical or doctrinal narrowness. Occasionally one discovers men of very advanced liberal views who retain the practices and much of the language of thorough-going Ritualism. I am not without sympathy for the position of men who have outlived their earlier creed without having lost the æsthetic tastes which were once associated with it; but I strongly feel that the very last way to restore the harmony between lay and clerical feeling which the Oxford Movement destroyed is by attempting to combine a secret and esoteric Rationalism or a sceptical "Pragmatism" with the externals of a Sacerdotalism whose intellectual basis has really been abandoned. The influence of the continental Modernists is already beginning powerfully to affect our younger High Churchmen; but if they

want to command the intellectual respect accorded to M. Loisy and his associates, they must imitate them in avoiding an exaggerated stress upon the externals of Religion. Many rites and usages which are tolerable enough where they have long been a matter of course, become incompatible with genuine Liberalism and injurious to spiritual Religion when forced by individual clergymen upon a community which deliberately rejected them three centuries ago. No doubt many of the changes introduced by the Oxford Movement into Anglican worship are now generally accepted; but the forcing of unaccustomed and illegal ritual upon unwilling congregations can only be justified by a view of the Church and its authority which is impossible to one who has absorbed anything of the spirit of M. Loisy or the Italian Modernists.

The worst feature in the outlook is the decline in the supply of able candidates for orders. The scanty supply of well-educated and broad-minded clergymen is the chief

obstacle to the growth of devout and reasonable religious Liberalism among the laity. The decline of Church-going among educated laymen and the unwillingness of educated men to take orders advance together: they act and react upon one another. Men will not go to Church to hear views about the damnation of heretics,<sup>1</sup> about the Fall, about the Atonement, about Absolution and Sacraments which they have ceased to believe; or, on the other hand, to listen to discourses so moderate that it is impossible to discover what the preacher really thinks about just the questions which interest thoughtful people. Clerical vocations seldom emerge out of families in which the father and mother have ceased to attend

<sup>1</sup> I have just come back from hearing in an Oxford Church a sermon by a very young man in which it was clearly taught that "Arius, Socinus, and all the wretched heretics of the present day" would be damned everlastingly. That is the sort of thing which is emptying the Churches. The sermon disclosed amazing ignorance of the simplest critical facts, and not one single spark of Christian Charity or even of religious feeling. I mention this trifling fact lest it should be said that teaching of this type is quite obsolete. It is happily obsolescent.

Church, and in which the clergy are never mentioned with intellectual respect.

But nothing is more useless than mere lamentation over the decline of rational Religion. Enough has been said, perhaps, to suggest to those whom the vast practical activities of the ecclesiastical machine do not blind to the plain facts of the case that we are approaching, if we have not reached, an intellectual crisis precisely similar to that which is going on upon the continent. The most cheering event of our times has been the growth of a liberal religious movement—profoundly religious as well as liberal—among the clergy of France and Italy. The Papacy has done what it could to crush that movement. Our ecclesiastical rulers do not possess similar powers of repression: but they are very powerful notwithstanding, and we have a right to look to them not merely for abstinence from such manifestos as the recent Encyclical, but for some positive help in the task of theological reconstruction. In trying to answer

the question "What can be done?", I am thinking especially of the things which seem to require combined and corporate effort, and which most distinctly demand the leadership and assistance of the Bishops and other highly placed ecclesiastics. If the kind of theological reconstruction of which I am thinking necessarily involved the holding of what are commonly considered advanced liberal opinions, it would, of course, be useless to look to the present episcopal bench for help; but the sort of obsolete teaching of which we most want to get rid is teaching in which few of our Bishops really believe. For our immediate purpose, at least a third of the Bishops may be regarded as Liberals, and a much larger number are sufficiently in touch with the spirit of their age to be quite capable of appreciating the importance of encouraging among the clergy a more open-minded attitude towards what may be conveniently called modern thought than is at present at all common. I want, in the few pages which remain to me, to

suggest what they might do to counteract that alienation of educated laymen from the Church which is endangering the very existence of Christianity among us.

(1) I am not one of those who expect great results of any kind from monster Assemblies of Bishops. Even among those who believe in the infallibility of such Assemblies, the more authoritative and the more intelligent opinion attaches little weight to mere numbers: it is only a "morally unanimous" vote that carries weight. In such Assemblies weight and numbers rarely go together. All the learning and the ability of the Roman Church were against the decree of Papal Infallibility, but it was carried nevertheless by the numerical preponderance of the Bishops who presided over tiny dioceses in Italy or larger areas in still more backward regions. The power of such Assemblies for good is small: their power for evil is large. In the present state of opinion, the most that can be hoped for is that there will be no pronouncements tending to the

narrowing of our Church, no putting back the hands of the theological clock. With the spectacle of the Papal Encyclical before their eyes—the dismay it has produced among intelligent Romanists and the open delight it has occasioned to the avowed enemies of all Christianity—it is to be hoped that the more liberal and learned minority of the Anglican Episcopate may at least have influence enough to stop reactionary pronouncements. Could there not even be carried some very moderate and general declaration in favour of sober and honest criticism, some repudiation of obsolete and literalist “theories of inspiration”? Such a declaration would be of value both in defending clergymen—I am not thinking merely of advanced “Liberals,” but of all who accept *any* of the critical results at all—from charges of dishonesty, and of convincing “the plain man” that, when an individual clergyman assures him that the acceptance of such and such a position is compatible with Christianity and Churchmanship, he is not expressing

merely a private opinion, but one generally recognised in the Church. Even if such a declaration were proposed and supported by a considerable minority of the Bishops, it would be a valuable note of progress to set off against the calamitous defiance of all modern thought by the Pope, and the silent, if unwilling, acquiescence of the Roman Episcopate. The general public know enough of the way Bishops are made to be aware that the prelates whose opinions on such matters really count are usually a minority.

(2) But it is chiefly as individuals that the more liberal Bishops can help those who are struggling to emancipate the Church from the dead-weight of obsolete opinion. The most obvious way in which they can do this is by placing no difficulties in the way of liberal-minded candidates for orders. There are already many Bishops to whom we could send such men with little fear of their rejection. Some of the most personally orthodox prelates are, it is right to acknowledge, very tolerant

in this and in other ways. But something more than bare toleration of liberal opinions is wanted if the right kind of men are to be encouraged to take orders. The general feeling among the abler undergraduates who are possible candidates for orders is that the whole weight of Church opinion—of the Bishops, of the clergy, of all recognised organs and representatives of Church opinion—is dead against the honest facing of intellectual difficulties, against the honest recognition of the results of liberal criticism and modern thought. This affects them in two ways. It makes them doubt the honesty of taking orders, and still more it puts them out of sympathy with the whole institution. They cannot feel much enthusiasm for a Ministry in which they will be made to feel that they are at best tolerated outsiders. When we remember the enormous power of calling attention to their utterances which Bishops possess—by preaching, by visitation charges, by writing—it cannot be said that they have done much to diffuse

a liberal and thoughtful theology among the laity, or to encourage the more intelligent candidates for orders. We have at least some six or seven English Bishops whose theological opinions are as liberal as those of Bishop Moorhouse, who recently resigned the see of Manchester. Among the present Archbishops and Bishops there are some to whom Liberals owe some gratitude, but hardly one of them has "spoken out," or used his influence to encourage liberally-minded clergymen, as he did. Too often, when an enlightened and scholarly divine becomes a Bishop, his principal ambition seems to be—by his appointments, by fulminations about "distinctive Church teaching" or "the Canon Law," by denouncing little irregularities of a non-ritualistic character, by vague talk about the Catholic Church, and at all events by scrupulous silence on every question upon which inquiring Churchmen might naturally look to him for guidance, to persuade his clergy—and particularly the ultra-sacerdotalist

section of them—that he (the Bishop) is not so black as he has been painted. The clergy naturally take their cue from the Bishops. The more reactionary a young clergyman is, the more boldly and blatantly he airs his crude opinions about Confession, the Church, the Sacraments. The more intelligent his opinions, the more he is tempted to take refuge in vague platitudes which will offend no one.

(3) The real strength of Anti-liberalism in the Church is to be found in the theological colleges. It is in the long run the Seminaries that have ruined the Church of Rome. You have only to contrast the state of clerical opinion (till recently) in Italy with its state in Catholic Germany, the state of the clerical mind in the Church of England with the tone of the Scotch Presbyterian Churches, to appreciate the difference between a theological education in a university and a theological education in a Seminary. A Scotch candidate for the ministry spends four years in studying theology under a variety of professors—all

men of fairly advanced years and real learning in some special branch of theology, often scholars of European reputation. They are men of different opinions, some of them probably decidedly liberal, all of them scholars who approach the subject with a desire for intellectual thoroughness. In a word, the instruction is eminently "wissenschaftlich." An English candidate for orders (if he be a university man) goes (generally for one year) to a college of twenty or thirty men, where a Principal and one or two other teachers—the latter often very young men, chosen for ability no doubt, but also for their loyalty to a party creed—attempt to teach all branches of theology. With the best will in the world, it would not be possible to communicate any adequate knowledge of scientific theology, to initiate men into the spirit of theological research, to lay any adequate basis for future study in one year, much interrupted (perhaps rightly) by very frequent services, religious addresses, retreats, and devotional exercises of

various kinds, and by some amount of practical work. And, as a matter of fact, the type of theology taught at the larger and more popular theological colleges is, for the most part, an advanced Sacerdotalism. I do not deny that sometimes the elementary principles and results of criticism are taught—probably not without a little “economy.” But all that I have heard, and hear, of the training which these colleges supply suggests that their atmosphere is uncongenial to thought, to freedom, to inquiry. They foster an intensely ecclesiastical spirit. At best the interest of the men is absorbed by the purely practical and devotional side of Religion: at the worst attention is concentrated upon the distinctive tenets of a strongly partisan theology. Often there is considerable pressure put upon the student to go to confession, and the importance or efficacy of Priestly Absolution is constantly insisted upon. They tend to inspire a sense not merely of the dignity and sacredness of the clerical vocation, but of the vast

difference between Priest and layman. For this state of things it is impossible not to hold the Bishops partially responsible. Most of the colleges are entirely or partly under episcopal control. Yet how often the Principal or Vice-principal whom a Bishop appoints to his theological college is a higher and narrower Churchman than himself! One or two of the more liberal Bishops have attempted to set up small theological schools of a more moderate and reasonable complexion. The best results have followed from these efforts; but it may be doubted whether there exists in all England a theological college in which the tone is as enlightened, as intellectual, as liberal as it is in the seminary of a certain modernising French Archbishop.

In ways like these the Bishops might help us. Of course some of the things I have asked for can only be expected from those Bishops whose own theological opinions are more decidedly liberal; but there are few of their lordships who do not more or less appreciate the

value of an intellectually open state of mind, of the desire to know, of the desire honestly to face difficulties. Let it be remembered that the repression of opinion—the rejection of a candidate for orders, the denunciation of some clergyman for holding a certain opinion, the worrying of an incumbent into resignation, the withdrawal of a curate's licence, the passing over of Liberals in the distribution of patronage, the encouragement given to some hopelessly ignorant and incompetent piece of apologetics—exercises a depressing and deterrent effect which is not confined to those who hold the particular view which may be in question. When a thoughtful undergraduate hears from a Bishop in the pulpit that a man who does not believe the Virgin Birth or the personality of the Devil cannot be a Christian, or at all events a clergyman, it is not only the man who has definitely rejected those beliefs, but the man who realises the difficulty of the questions who is discouraged. He may know that the latter opinion involves philosophical

difficulties, while the former raises a host of critical questions upon which Christian scholars are divided, and he does not know what effect further study (before or after his ordination at twenty-three) may have upon his mind. If he is told that one answer to the question will ruin his clerical career, he is dissuaded from thinking further of holy orders. There are much less "advanced" pieces of Liberalism than doubts about the Virgin Birth which induce men to give up the idea of being ordained, and which would have no such effect if they could hear from a Bishop—in public—that they constitute no valid objection to ordination; nay, that they are (as is very likely the case) shared by the Bishop himself. I have no hesitation in saying that some of the episcopal sermons we have heard in Oxford, however excellent on the purely practical side, have by their intellectual—or anti-intellectual—tone done much to discourage thoughtful men from becoming clergymen. And, after all, it is not

only possible clergymen who have souls. The thoughtful layman, intending to remain a layman, might often be helped to remain a Christian if he could feel that those who represent the Church had got some kind of an answer to the difficulties which he feels.

And yet it must be admitted that the limits of what can be done for our cause by persons in authority are soon reached. It was not by episcopal support that the Oxford Movement won its short-lived influence among the educated laity, or its present ascendancy among the clergy. I do not for a moment suppose—I am not sure that I desire—a similar triumph for a liberal “party.” The very success of a liberal party dooms it to extinction. As soon as an opinion becomes common, it ceases to be thought distinctively liberal. When they see the extent to which the opinions which forty or even twenty years ago were regarded as liberal almost beyond the limits of toleration have already leavened the Church, Liberals need have no fear as to the

continuous advance of clerical opinion. That in a country like England—where (in spite of theological colleges, of clergy-houses, and of “religious orders”) the clergy are in contact with the ordinary currents of lay opinion, and breathe the atmosphere of free discussion—there will ultimately be all the liberty we want as regards criticism, and the theological questions which can be affected by critical opinions—of this I have no doubt whatever. The danger is that by the time that result is accomplished the alienation of ordinary lay thought and feeling from the clergy and “the Churches” will be too complete to be restored, and that a better understanding may still be impeded by an ecclesiasticism of tone and sentiment which will have survived the theology that gave it birth. If the laity lose the habit of Church-going, able and liberal sermons in the empty churches will no more restore it than they do in Protestant Germany. If the idea that the position of a clergyman is a suitable one for men who

might attain high success in other professions once disappears, the Bishops of the future will appeal in vain for such candidates. Able men will not care to adopt a calling which has lost its influence. If these results are to be averted, there must be more boldness, more effort, and a more missionary spirit among us. If everyone would really teach up to the level of his own knowledge and conviction, the battle would be won. There must be more co-operation between the more moderate and the more advanced Liberals. We must not be eager to accuse of heresy those who go a little further than ourselves, or to disparage as narrow and illiberal those who do not go so far. It is the simplest and most universally admitted liberal principles that most want teaching and propagating. On the negative side it is the most universally abandoned positions that most want disclaiming. On the positive side it is the most essential truths of Theism and the Christian revelation that should fill the largest place in our teaching.

The eventual triumph of Liberalism—on its destructive side—in the world at large is certain: the triumph of Liberal Christianity, or even Liberal Religion, is, alas! not so well assured. Liberalism will triumph, whether the clergy become liberal or not. That any form of Religion can exercise a wide influence without a clergy to teach it, history supplies us with no reason for supposing. Liberal Religion cannot prevail without a liberal clergy. “Like Priest, like People.”

What changes we ought to agitate for in the formulæ or organisation of the Church it hardly belongs to this article to consider. The discrepancy between real opinion and apparent profession, the inevitableness of which I have admitted, is not a good thing in itself. We ought to try and diminish it. For the immediate present, I suggest that our objects should be—the optional use of the Athanasian Creed; the substitution of a promise to use the Prayer Book for the declaration of assent; the substitution in the Ordinal of the milder answer about

the Bible required of priests for the stronger one demanded of deacons; the removal of a few admittedly obsolete forms and expressions from the Prayer Book. We shall not get even these things in a day. But the agitation for them will do good. The time may come when the proposal to substitute the original Nicene Creed (in which the clauses that most trouble conscience are absent) for the present Constantinopolitan formula may receive a respectful hearing; but that day is not to-day. Perhaps it may be to-morrow.

## LAY LIBERALISM

BY

PROFESSOR PERCY GARDNER

THE layman who writes as a liberal in Church matters represents an immense constituency. Liberal clergymen are in a minority, though by no means in a contemptible minority, among their brethren. But it is safe to say that at all events among lay churchmen who have been to a good school and who read something beside the newspaper, the great majority are in some sense liberal. *In some sense* is emphatic ; because liberalism may take many forms, good and bad. Too often it takes the form of indifference, or of carping criticism : this is the Charybdis into which those who avoid the Scylla of ecclesiasticism often fall. I have no claim to represent the ecclesiastically-

mindful layman, and I have no wish to represent the indifferent layman. But I intend to try to represent the point of view of the layman to whom religion is a reality, not the whole of life, but its noblest and most ideal side, who thinks of his church with a stir of emotion, and realises how poverty-stricken his life would be without it, who is determined that his children shall enjoy the religious privileges which he has himself enjoyed, who feels, as he grows elderly, a constantly increasing tendency to lean upon the common life of the Church, and to face the problems of our time in the Anglican ranks.

I.

But is not this the attitude of conservatism? Does any large number of the faithful laity desire far-going reforms? Are churchmen not content to remain as they are? It seems to me strange that these questions should even be put. On whichever side we look, we see great changes going on, and still greater up-

heavals threatening. In politics the state of matters is very unstable. A secularist socialist party is growing stronger and stronger. We see the utmost unrest among the nations of the Continent, and Asia is growing every year more impatient of European predominance. And in religion everything seems in a flux; manners changing, Sunday observance dying down, vast masses of the people becoming mere indifferent spectators of the life of religion, secularism invading the school, and parents throwing aside all responsibility for the religious training of their children. No one who really considers the signs of the times can cherish a light heart as regards the future of the Church; while to those who are naturally unhopeful the days may well seem like those days before the Flood, when men ate and drank and married, until the heavy hand of God fell on them suddenly.

We see the forces of dissolution working everywhere; and we see the forces of conservatism gathered together against them; and

in some places—in Russia, in politics; at Rome, in religion—for the time, triumphant and determined to crush the enemy. Few times have there been when to advocate moderate and reasonable reforms would seem so hopeless. Yet it is moderate and reasonable reforms which we of the English Church are bound to advocate. The English nation is one of the most conservative and slow-moving of all nations. And the English Church is, by the facts of its origin and history, strongly associated with this side of the national character. One may fairly say that the cause of moderation is the cause of our Church, that the *via media* is the only way open to her. If so, then surely for us of all people there is a necessity for consideration of moderate reforms which may make the Church better suited to the needs of the new time.

It is saddening to see to what matters many of our most attached and earnest members give the talents which should lead us in the ways of adaptation to the age. Many of them

are constantly discussing the possibility of reunion, and making absurd advances to the Roman or the Greek Churches, which meet with no response. The fact is that at present reunion would mean the abandonment of causes for which our ancestors have lived and died during four centuries. Others are taken up with questions about the use of vestments or of incense, or the reservation of the Sacrament. An Anglican Bishop has just published a book discussing the five species or stages of elevation in the Eucharist, and examining the question which of them are primitive or permissible. Others vehemently object even to the least modification of the Athanasian Creed, oblivious of the fact that the presence of the creed in the service keeps multitudes of English churchmen (however unreasonably) away from church at many of the festivals. It is quite useless to discuss the question of reform in the Church of England, unless we may assume, in the first place, that reform is desirable ; and, in the second place, that reform

should be in the direction of bringing the Church nearer to the best religious life of the people, not in the direction of some fancied approximation to primitive usage or the formulæ of the sixteenth century.

After all, the more we consider the position of other branches of the Church of Christ, the more we shall realise our inestimable advantages. On one side we see the Roman Church, with its newly - revived inquisition and its avowed determination to put an end to all liberty of thought. On the other side we see the smaller Protestant churches drifting hither and thither, and welcoming the wildest aberrations in thought and practice. We cling the more closely to our Church, and feel the enormous advantages it can claim. In the first place, it is free and comprehensive, allowing wide latitude of views even to the clergy, so that a pastor who is really useful and devoted will seldom be called in question for any breadth of opinion, or for any views as to ritual, unless he is intolerant of the differing

views of others. In the second place, it is national, representing the English race on its most characteristic side,—a slow-minded race, with a strong belief in truth and righteousness, not given to the pursuit of distant ideals, but eager to do what is right under the present circumstances ; a race accessible to literature and poetry, but without much feeling for art ; a tolerant, quiet, and manly people, with a faculty for command. In the third place, it lies close to the facts of personal religion, interposing no sacerdotal class between the souls of men and God, but trying to bring the worshipper and the Worshipped into close relations. In all its services such great spiritual realities as sin and pardon, atonement and holiness, the desire of a better life and cravings for divine aid, are made the main theme. It fully realises that the Church can only provide the opportunity ; the real work of salvation lies between the soul and its Maker. And, in the fourth place, it has historic justification ; it is a great stem of the Christian tree, drawing sap

from the roots, connected by a never broken tradition with the early history of Christianity, a reservoir to contain all that the merits of saints and heroes in the past have contributed to the richness of spiritual life in our later days.

I have said that reform must lie in the direction not of any fancied return to authoritative usage, but in the direction of giving wider scope to the best spiritual forces of the age. If I may be allowed, without arrogance, to criticise from this point of view the line taken by far better men than myself, I will venture to say that I regard as foredoomed to failure the attempts of some excellent men among the clergy to attract the people by imposing ritual and elaborate symbolism. The Englishman is scarcely to be approached from that side. I do not say it in praise of the national tendencies, rather in dispraise; but, as an archæologist, I have long discovered that as a nation we are singularly devoid of feeling for art and ceremony. From the Eton

boy to the intelligent artisan we have a certain contempt for "flummery"; and we must be approached through the intelligence. Hence no line of action could be worse adapted to its environment than the tendency among High Church clergy to depreciate preaching and make everything of sacraments, to substitute symbolism for discussion. None of our bishops is more practical than the Bishop of Stepney, who in a recent work<sup>1</sup> earnestly advocates appeals to the people by means of sermons and addresses and every kind of discourse. This seems to me the only hopeful way of approaching them. We may appeal to the parallel case of University Extension. It is proved by a long experience that the English working classes are thoroughly accessible to every teacher in secular matters who can prove to them that he is an authority in his subject. The extension lecturers gain an influence, both wide and deep, and are readily listened to in such matters as ethics and social organisation.

<sup>1</sup> *The Opportunity of the Church of England.*

Nor have their auditors any prejudice against authority: the fact that the teachers are authorised and recognised by a great University lies at the root of the trust imposed in them by the Trades Unions and other such bodies. Surely these things are a parable.

Nothing could show more clearly how far the sacramentalist clergy have drifted from contact with present needs and existing circumstances than the indifference which they have generally shown to the rapidly progressing secularisation of the Sunday. Now, whatever may be the case in past ages and in other countries, there can be no doubt that, owing to historic reasons, the Sunday as an institution is the foundation-stone of religion in England and Scotland. If it goes, there is nothing which can ever take its place. This, not ritual or vestments, is the test *stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*. But until lately, at all events, there has been a tendency among a school of clergy almost to sympathise with the con-

stantly-growing custom of the people to make Sunday a mere day of amusement.

Let us, however, assume that some reforms of the kind I have tried to indicate are desirable. What are the matters ecclesiastic in which laymen are most concerned? I think them to be two: first the Prayer Book and church services; secondly, social work. Let us briefly consider each of these, trying to discern in each a course of reform at once liberal, and faithful to the spirit of the Christian Church.

## II.

Without being in full sympathy with the rapid changes and feverish activities of our time, one may feel that any institution which tries to remain stationary in a moving world stands at a very great disadvantage. In a century our habits, our tastes, our intellectual atmosphere are so greatly altered, that it is impossible that the services which met the needs of our great-grandfathers should meet ours also.

They could hardly be suitable to the sleepy and conservative Georgian age and to the twentieth century. This has, of course, been generally felt; and our services have been altered. The music has become brighter, the hymns more varied, more ritual and ceremony has been introduced. The sermon has been shortened, and has gained in actuality. These changes are doubtless, on the whole, an improvement; but they are in only one direction. They show adaptation to the views of a clergy which has been deeply affected by the Anglican revival of the middle of the last century, as well as to the impatience, the need of stimulus, the desire for what is bright and stirring, which so deeply marks young people in these days. But what has been done to promote intelligent thought on the great problems of religion, a deep and steady spiritual life, a consecration of progress to Christian purposes? The habit of attending early Communion has spread, and to this other services have been in some degree sacrificed. Can it be said that these

other services stand now at a much higher level in the matters of Christian thought and emotion than they did fifty years ago? It may be that we have not gone back, we may even have improved : but compare such progress, if there be progress, with the advances which have been made in every branch of secular knowledge.

In truth, the ignorance of things religious in which the children, not only of the poor but of the well-to-do, grow up is appalling. I know that my most valuable possession, during all my life, has been the knowledge of the Bible imparted to me on Sunday afternoons by my mother. Few parents now instruct their children in religious knowledge ; they pass on the task to the schoolmaster, who, in turn, hands on the responsibility to the clergyman. But the clergyman has fifty other things to do, and he may not have a gift for instructing the young. In any case, he is very unlikely to impart such a love of the Bible and of religion as one acquires in a religious home. Still, the

fact remains that the duty of the intelligent setting forth of religious fact and Christian history is thrown more and more on the clergy, and they do not usually seem to regard this duty with the seriousness which its importance demands. *Quis custodiet custodes?*

Some kind of revision of the Prayer Book has, I think, become necessary.<sup>1</sup> At the same time one almost trembles at the suggestion. One foresees endless clashing between schools and views. One dreads losing what one most values in the Prayer Book; and still more one dreads the insertion of what would be painful, and contrary to the history and the spirit of the English Church. As a reformed communion we have behind us a life of three centuries and a half, and in that time we have formed a character which is part of the character of the English people, and the loss of which would be the prelude to total destruction.

<sup>1</sup> Since writing this paper I have read an article on "Revision," by Canon Beeching, in the October number of the *Church Quarterly Review*. I agree with it in almost every point.

Yet I venture to think that a revision of the Prayer Book would be, not merely possible, but even not difficult, if each of the great parties in the Church would make up its mind that the preservation of the unity of the Church is an end worth striving for, and that this unity can only be preserved by self-sacrifice. If each party would but agree to a self-denying ordinance, and waive all attempt to alter the Prayer Book in its own special direction, rather preserving the balance and compromise upon which it was originally founded, then changes could be made to which only prejudice and stupidity could object.

For it seems perfectly clear that there is much in our services which is obviously improvable. We are so used to what we hear as often as we enter a church, and it is bound up so closely with our own history and the emotions which twine around our history, that we easily allow much that strikes a stranger with astonishment. Imagine an intelligent Indian or Japanese entering a church, and hearing our

gentlewomen and carefully nurtured children singing, "Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow: let his children be vagabonds, and beg their bread. . . . Let there be no man to pity him, nor to have compassion upon his fatherless children." Would not our visitor feel thankful that in Buddhist temples no such imprecations would be possible? If a member of another of the Reformed churches wandered into one of our cathedrals to see how we celebrated the birthday of the Saviour, he might well hear us repeating all about the raiment of needlework and the gift of the daughter of Tyre. "What in the world," he would say, "has this to do with the birth of Christ? It is a marriage song, perhaps, of one of the kings of Judah: but surely we are not assembled to celebrate a marriage." And to me it seems scarcely less incongruous, that at the most solemn service of the Church, when all hearts are lifted up so far as their nature allows, we find ourselves reciting at great length the prohibitions of the Jewish decalogue,

one at least of which our Master deliberately and intentionally set aside, while others are sufficiently enforced by the criminal law.

No doubt, in these cases and many others, good churchmen do not take the words of the service in any literal sense; they transform them by religious feeling into something Christian. They think that it is sin, not the sinner, that we condemn in those terrible Psalms; and that the decalogue may be widened to include most sins of action and even thought. Yet why lay such a burden upon our shoulders, a burden which is borne by no other branch of the Christian Church? And there is also a great danger in the feeling of unreality which comes from constantly using words in a fanciful sense. The result is that even the most solemn and appropriate of prayers often glide over the surface of the minds of attendants at a service, "like a tale of little meaning, though the words be strong." We acquire the notion that words used in Church are used in a non-natural sense, and

that we may leave them behind at the porch, passing out into a life with which they have little in common.

No doubt, if such a revision of the Prayer Book were attempted, that its general broad character were altered, the results would be disastrous. If the High Church party succeeded in seriously altering the character of the Communion Service in a sacerdotal direction, or if the Broad Church party succeeded in omitting the creeds,<sup>1</sup> the result would be, and must be, disastrous; indeed, such changes must bring disruption. Would any wise and loyal churchman advocate such changes? Speaking for myself, I must say that though I belong to the advanced school of criticism, and could find reason to object to many things in the daily services, yet I should be very sorry to see any changes made which would unfit them for the expression of the religious

<sup>1</sup> That is, the shorter creeds. As to the Athanasian Creed, it is the object of profound dislike to the great mass of the laity; and its removal most desirable. The Church of Ireland gets on quite well without it.

feelings and hopes of the general body of worshippers. They are meant, not for the few, but for the many. The man who cannot join in forms of worship with which his heart is in sympathy because of critical doubts, or because he dislikes certain details of ritual, is a man to be pitied.

But there are changes in the services of the Church which would involve no question of doctrine, but merely adaptation to a changed intellectual and moral atmosphere. Is it impossible that all parties should assent to some of these alterations, leaving the larger questions of Church practice and doctrine for a time when there may be more general agreement? Let me mention a few of them.

1. The Old Testament lectionary for Sundays and Festivals is still very unsatisfactory. Many chapters selected for Sunday reading, especially in the months of August and September, seem most perversely chosen; while many of the finest passages in the Bible are never heard in Sunday services. The

reason of this is not obscure : those who made the selection did not go by the intrinsic worth of various sections of the Bible, but regarded them in the light of views as to history prophecy and symbolical interpretation, which no longer have any adherents among scholars. Any group of Biblical experts, however selected, could not fail to make a better selection of passages than the present. The same thing holds of the selection of special Psalms for Festivals: the Psalms were not usually chosen as being in harmony with the spirit of the Festival, but as containing certain verses which could be regarded as prophetic in the obsolete sense of the word.

2. The Church of England is, I believe, the only Church in Christendom which goes through the whole of the Psalms in her public services. I am not speaking of the use in monasteries or of such esoteric services. For all time the Psalms must remain among the most valuable embodiments of the spirit of worship. They are the Church's jewels; but

they vary greatly,—in date, in character, and in appropriateness to a Christian service. Moreover, they are in extent too great to be satisfactorily included in the services of a month. The omission of a third, or even half, of them would be a far greater gain than loss.

3. Of the special services of the Church, some perhaps could not be altered without bringing in the question of doctrine. But two seem free from this difficulty, the marriage service and that of burial. To improve the former would be easy, even if it were approached only from the side of good sense and good manners, and if no really religious question were raised. The burial service seems to me quite one of the least successful parts of the Prayer Book. One must appreciate the difficulties of the compilers, who had to remove Mediæval views decisively rejected by the conscience of the nation; and it was very difficult to do so without taking away the life of the service. They fell back on St Paul. In our day we could surely wish that

that great apostle should less completely dominate our burials with his sublime but sometimes out of date theories of the future life, based as they were on an expectation of the almost immediate Second Coming of his Master. The spirit of the occasional prayers in the services for the sick and the dying is admirable, and in every way worthy of the Church ; a few prayers of the same kind introduced into the burial service, with the omission of part of the long Pauline passage, would greatly improve and enrich it. At present its severe coldness is almost appalling.

4. One scarcely dares to suggest that even out of present materials it would be possible to arrange services of more variety and greater interest than those in present use. Many of the most beautiful prayers in the Prayer Book are heard but once a year, while others are staled by constant repetition, in season and out of season. This applies still more to the Canticles. Surely the imagination of the Church is not so stunted, nor her power of utterance

so closely limited, that we need sing every morning of our lives about the days of temptation in the wilderness, as the only possible introduction to Christian worship. We need alternative services suited to various occasions and various audiences. Perhaps experience does not warrant us in thinking that our bishops and deans are able to compose suitable prayers, like the divines of the sixteenth century. But even so, it would be easy to add to the storehouse of the Prayer Book, already rich, many prayers from old liturgies. And it would be taking a very low view of the faculties of the clergy to regard them as wholly unfit to introduce from time to time written or extemporary prayers of their own composition.

The Prayer Book contains much beside the services of the Church, Creeds, Articles of Religion, and the like. But of these a layman need not speak; they mainly concern the clergy. What is really in the interests of laymen is that nothing in the way of Creed or Article should be so tightly interpreted as to

exclude from the ministry men who have a real vocation for it. It is well known that under the influence of Dean Stanley greater generality was introduced into the formula of assent to the Prayer Book imposed on the clergy. This concession has been beyond value: it is of the utmost importance to make sure that no bishop ventures to re-introduce into his own diocese a more rigid formula of assent. Such an attempt can only be a usurpation. If the Church chooses, as a whole, to make pronouncement in such matters, that is another matter: but no bishop has any right to assume that he can in his own diocese speak with the voice of the community.

I do not propose to speak of ritual and vestments. It is a subject in which most laymen take very little interest. They would be quite content to leave the matter to the clergy, if it were not that they know that the clergy value these things for their symbolism, and that the doctrines involved in the symbolism are exactly the doctrines to which they have the strongest

objection. For this reason they cannot be indifferent. Nor do I think that anything has more tended to foster the notion that church is a place for women and children, but not for men, than the emphasis laid by so many of the clergy on symbolic ritual. Surely if there be one matter to which St Paul's principle of concession to the feelings of others applies, it is this matter of ritual. Nothing is a more frequent cause of offence, and nothing could be in itself of less importance.

### III.

Turning next to the question of the work of the Church, I must express my satisfaction that in some of the papers issued by the Committees of the Pan-Anglican Congress, a strong desire is expressed that laymen should take a larger share in the direction and furtherance of church activity. It is seen that one of the greatest dangers of the Church is the present apathy of the layman, who seems ready to stand aside, and allow everything to be done

and arranged by the clergy. No one can doubt that it is most desirable to make the layman feel that he has an interest in the matter, and that this interest is in danger of suffering. I would suggest that the best, and indeed the only, way to overcome the apathy of the laity is to assign to them more responsibility, to give them a real working share in the Church, and to be willing to accept their views even when they are not altogether agreeable to the clergy. If a clergyman wants to find docile disciples, who will accept his views and follow his lead submissively, he may find such; but they will not be men of character or intelligence. Englishmen are not imaginative, and they are apt not to be interested in any matter unless they have some control of it. But the moment they have a voice in determining courses of action, they are likely to become keener and keener. Such is the psychology of the matter. Would it not be well to try to draw in the laity, by establishing church councils, to which may be submitted

not merely questions of business, but even of the manner of conducting services? The result would be undoubtedly to diminish the gap, which at present seems widening, between clergy and laity. The Church might again become, what in many places it is ceasing to be, the Church of the people. I may add that I have watched such a council lately, and think that its action has been decidedly beneficent. But as things are, it has no real power.

In regard to the social work of the Church the place of the layman is still clearer and his aid more imperatively needed.

In recent years there has arisen a strong wave of what may be called in no hostile phrase the passion of materialist altruism, which has flooded all the countries of Europe and America. There has grown on all sides a conviction that the life of the poor, especially in our great cities, is far less happy than it ought to be and might be. And a desire of increasing that happiness, of giving a better

and less degraded existence to the toiling millions, has come to dominate the life of thousands of our younger men. The means to this end they often catch at hastily—passion is notable for blinding the eyes;—whence a great deal of evil as well as of good has arisen out of a sympathy in itself wholly humane. No Church can stand outside this trend of public feeling; and it is not strange that it has deeply affected the clergy and the laity of the English Church. The danger is that it may too completely dominate the clergy, so that they may come to consider the relief of the poor as their main function, and for it in some degree neglect their more spiritual function.

No doubt the clergy, in their exceptional position, are able to do great service in helping the poor. But Christianity as a religion is based on the view that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth; and the man who gives up that view gives up his Master. After all, the great duty of the clergy is to keep before people the

supreme reality of the spiritual life: that is their function, and if they subordinate it to any other enthusiasm, however excellent in itself, society will suffer irretrievably. Can anyone turn, however hastily, the pages of Christian history, without seeing that the whole spring of it lies in the value set on the immaterial as compared with the material? People say that until the masses reach a certain level of comfort they cannot be Christian. However keenly one may sympathise with those who desire to raise the level of material existence, one must remember that Christianity grew to maturity in the slums of ancient cities, slums compared with which the worst districts of London and Liverpool are paradises. Have the poorest of the poor ever fasted or lived as hardly as Christian anchorites? We must not allow ourselves to be misled by cant in this matter. Physical comfort may be a more desirable thing than religious peace—that is a common view, though not a Christian view; but physical discomfort does not exclude

religious peace—that is as certain as the fact that the world revolves round the sun.

There is much social organising of an innocent kind which commonly falls on the clergy, especially in country places, such work as forming boys' brigades and arranging evening readings and lectures. This is, of course, excellent ; and it greatly helps the purely religious side of a clergyman's influence by putting him on friendly terms with his neighbours. But when we come to the organisation of charitable relief we reach something very different, and infinitely more easy to twist to bad ends. I am by no means sure that it would not be a good thing if the clergy, while taking a fair share in charitable work, would leave the main organisation of it to such bodies as County Councils and the Committees of the Charity Organisation Society. In hundreds of parishes the action of the clergy tends to degrade the poor by spoiling their love of independence, and tends to substitute a mean and querulous spirit for a courageous determination to make the best

of existing circumstances. Less almsgiving and more equality between the clergy and the poor would be a better relation with a view to the religious helpfulness of the former. And I know this to be the feeling of many of the clergy themselves.

I would fain end in a hopeful spirit. Nor is this difficult. For I am convinced, by a multitude of facts which have recently come under my observation, that a more moderate and reasonable spirit is spreading through the Anglican ranks. Among the clergy there is a growing feeling that the results of recent biblical criticism and research must be considered, and may even bring advantage. In the year 1905 a declaration<sup>1</sup> in favour of a more liberal attitude towards such criticism was signed by seventeen hundred and twenty-five clergymen of the Church of England. The Broad Church party, which seemed almost extinct at the end of the last century, is showing fresh life. Bishops, and even clerical papers

<sup>1</sup> Published by A. & C. Black : 1906.

like the *Guardian*, are growing less narrow, and more disposed to look beyond tradition to the facts of experience and history. “A breath of morning blows.” May the breath grow into a strong breeze, which may blow away the dust of centuries, and fill the sails of the Church for a fresh voyage into the misty future !

# POLITICAL LIBERALISM

BY

SIR C. THOMAS DYKE ACLAND

THE Gladstonian era has now passed away. Ten years have elapsed since its close. But in considering the relation of English churchmen to politics at the present moment, the fact that the greatest English statesman of the nineteenth century, who was for nearly half that century the leader of the Liberal party, was also the most eminent layman of the English Church, is one which cannot but be of the greatest significance.

If there be one characteristic which, in Mr Gladstone's most complex personality, was more salient than another, it was his most devoted attachment to the Church of England. And yet there never was a member of the

Liberal party in whose career the fundamental principles of Liberalism were more strikingly exemplified.

It should therefore not be difficult to show that attachment to the Church of England is not inconsistent with an earnest belief in Liberalism and a whole-hearted zeal for its application in politics.

It may be asked, What is Liberalism? And in what does attachment to the Church of England consist? And to each of these questions the answer cannot but be somewhat vague.

“Liberalism” during the last two generations has been for the most part used to denote the opposite of “Conservatism.” But that use of the word is only so far justifiable as meaning the creed of the Liberal party as distinguished from that of the Conservative party. Liberalism is not the opposite of Conservatism if Conservatism is intended to mean, as Conservatives would claim that it does, the conservation of the characteristic elements of the

British Constitution. For there are very many earnest Liberals who would say that the British Constitution is much safer in the hands of the Liberal party than in the hands of their opponents in Parliament.

The interpretation of the word as denoting a belief in broadening the basis of the constitution, with earnest fidelity to the principles of that constitution, though vague, would be far more accurate.

One of the most remarkable illustrations of this occurred in 1867, when the Conservative party, led by Mr Disraeli, after having for many years thwarted the efforts of their opponents to extend the suffrage, suddenly resolved to “dish the Whigs” by going straight for household suffrage in towns, which was a complete “volte face” from the position that they had up to that time unswervingly maintained in defence of the constitution.

It would be difficult to defend that step from a truly Conservative point of view. For though, from a purely party point of view,

it may have “dished the Whigs,” the step was in harmony with Liberal, and not with Conservative, principles.

The old Whig watchword, “Civil and Religious Liberty,” though not always an accurate description of the practice of the Whig party, does certainly describe shortly but truly the principles and practice of their Parliamentary successors, the Liberal party, of which Mr Gladstone was the founder, and to the end of his life the real leader, and it may be fairly claimed as a true description of the aims of “Political Liberalism” at the present day.

In the *Contemporary Review* for January 1908, the Rev. J. D. Sinclair, in an excellent article upon Liberalism and Christianity, has pointed out that “Liberalism finds its main arguments in principles which lie in the mind itself, while Conservatism is preoccupied with institutions which are a part of the existing order of things” . . . . “that the Conservative leader stands, so to speak, within the institu-

tions, and looks critically at the principles, while the Liberal leader stands within the principles, and looks critically at the institutions—the one teaching, by implication, that the value of the principles is to preserve and strengthen the institutions, and the other that the entire value and use of the institutions is to realise the principles.”

Now, it can hardly be denied that the English churchman, as such, stands within an institution ; but the very essence of that institution is that it should realise the principle which lies at the very bottom of the whole fabric of Liberalism, viz., the promotion of free responsible citizenship upon the Christian basis,—*“Do unto others as you would that they should”* *“do unto you.”*

The English churchman feels, at the bottom of his heart, that the Church exists for the Glory of God, as manifested in the good of all mankind ; that, as a member of that Church, it is his duty, as far as in him lies, to promote the good of all men within his reach.

Consequently, when such an issue is presented to him as the disestablishment of a branch of that Church in a region in which its Establishment cannot be clearly shown to be for the good of the people of that region, he will have to be guided by the maintenance of the principle rather than by that of the institution. The greater the sincerity of his churchmanship, that is to say, the more deeply he believes in the principles upon which it is founded, in other words, the stronger his faith, the greater will be the courage which will guide the application of those principles in political action, and the less anxious will he be lest the Church he believes in should suffer from the consequences of such application.

But the truth is that "attachment to the Church of England" has been for the most part in the United Kingdom far too generally taken to mean attachment to the so-called political principle of the Establishment of that Church. The examples, however, of Ireland and the Colonies afford ample demonstration

that Establishment is not a principle of the English Church. If a principle at all, it is a political, not an ecclesiastical, principle. But, in reality, it is an institution, and not a principle. That is to say, the maintenance of the Establishment of the Church, as a political application of the principles of Christianity, has ceased to justify itself on the ground of necessity, since it has become obvious that Christianity does not depend upon the Establishment of the Church for its maintenance in this country.

But the Establishment may have, and in the minds of many churchmen it has, a very great value as regards the Church herself, quite apart from the Endowment with which, in the mind of the politician, it is usually linked.

For one of the present characteristics of the Church of England is her comprehensiveness, *i.e.* the fact that within her borders there is room for many standpoints; many aspects of truth commend themselves to different groups of her members, with equal force and sincerity

in each case, and consistently with equal loyalty to her leading principles.

This is not the place, nor is it intended in this paper to discuss any of these standpoints or the aspects in which the truth is viewed from them. It is wholly unnecessary to do so when the political position alone is being considered. But very many churchmen value above all others that special characteristic, comprehensiveness, and with such men, their attachment to the political institution of the Establishment of the Church by law is not in any sense due to a conservative value of the institution as such, but to their conviction as Liberals that a principle most dear to their hearts is best realised and preserved by its means.

They have a fear, which is far from being unreasonable, that the emancipation of the Church from the State control, to which, by her being Established, she is inevitably subject, would result in the loss of that breadth and comprehensiveness which keeps her borders wide enough to secure a freedom of thought, a liberty

of prophesying, for which it is at present hard to devise any other guarantee.

There are various aspects of this fact. It is true as regards clergy and laity alike. The Establishment acts to some extent upon clerical authority, to restrain it from abuse, but it also gives to the clergy who value it a certain freedom of utterance ; while, again, it gives to every subject of the King who is not, either by his own act or by some other special circumstance, severed from the National Church, a right to the ministrations of the clergy of that Church ; every minister also is liable to civil consequences for certain ecclesiastical offences.

It is therefore quite possible for one whose guiding principle is the love of individual liberty, to hold fast to a system which, in effecting the control of an institution, preserves the liberty of its individual members, on the very ground that upon the emancipation from State control which would, to some extent, follow upon the loss of State support of the institution as a whole, the individual members

of it would risk a diminution of their liberty as long as they remained attached to the institution.

This, then, is a fair example of what was said above, quoting from Rev. J. D. Sinclair, that a man may stand within principles, and look critically at the institution, the whole value of the institution being that it adequately realises the principles.

Such a man may perhaps, as a churchman, hold somewhat lightly by the institution of the Establishment of the Church, on the ground that the institution is of real value, not to the Church, but only to the State. And there are, of course, many such churchmen to whom "Establishment" seems simply a yoke, to be cast off as an incubus, and who hold that, in controlling the Church, the State is also curtailing the liberty of the individual members of the Church. And there are also many who base upon the experience gained in Ireland and in the Colonies a belief that, similarly, the home branch of the Church of

England, if rendered independent alike of the control and of the support of the State, would gain in energy and vitality.

Unquestionably, there is much to be said in support of such a belief. It is no doubt the conviction of most of the members of the non-conforming bodies. On the other hand, there are several very important counterbalancing considerations.

For instance, there is the fact that the Church of England grew, in the same way that other parts of the constitution have grown, that it never was by any definite statute established, and yet it is as much a part of the constitution as the Crown or either House of Parliament.

Again, the origin of the Diocesan and of the Parochial systems are lost in antiquity. They are parts of what has been, from the earliest times of our history, the National Church.

It was stipulated in Magna Charta that the Church of England should be free and inviolable. And when, by way of providing against Papal Supremacy, the Royal Supremacy was

proclaimed, that was not in any way the Establishment, or a creation, of a special branch of the Catholic Church, but rather an assertion that the final authority in things ecclesiastical, as well as in things temporal, must be the will of the nation, as expressed in the laws which it has made, or in the constitutional action of the Crown.

In this respect the Church stands in much the same relation as any other religious body towards the State. But it is marked off from these other bodies by the Royal Supremacy, the Episcopal bench in the House of Lords, and the disability of any beneficed minister to be a member of the House of Commons.

One feature, however, of the case, which is probably an "inseparable accident," if not an actual result, of "Establishment," is that, without the sanction of a Parliament, which may contain "Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics," the Church cannot alter or amend her own system, or reform any of her laws and regulations.

But at this many churchmen chafe, adding it to the deadening and relaxing influence which they allege to be the inevitable result of endowment and State support; they are inclined to cry out, "Away with Establishment; let the Church be as free from the King as she is from the Pope." To them the ancient identity of the Church with the Nation, as a National Church, the freedom of private judgment, the practical value of the Church as a pervading religious institution, the conferring of a Christian character upon the State, are as nothing compared with the liberty of action as a corporate body free from the interference of all outside, which, in their opinion, would be gained.

In the minds, then, of very many earnest churchmen the real question at issue is: Can the Church be given more liberty without incurring the risk of losing comprehensiveness? In the minds of many Liberals the converse question asks itself: Is the risk, which amounts almost to a certainty, of the disruption of the

corporate body, *i.e.* the loss of comprehensiveness, worth the loss of the contingent increase of vitality and energy among a small proportion of her members, and the certain narrowing of her borders, to the exclusion of vast masses of the nation who are now reckoned among her members? And Liberals who belong to the Church of England, or members of the Church of England who belong to the Liberal party, must have this question at the back of their minds whenever great problems of policy which in any way affect the Church arise for solution.

Now, during the last three generations, churchmen have had to face three or four large questions upon which legislation has taken place in which the interests of the Church have been involved. For instance, in 1868, Mr Gladstone carried a Bill for the Abolition of Compulsory Church Rates; in 1871, the Abolition of Tests at the Universities; in 1874 was passed the Public Worship Regulation Act; and, later, the Burials Bill.

In 1883 there was the great dispute about the Parliamentary Oath, and since 1876 there have been various struggles over the subject of Elementary Education. In every one of these cases the Conservative party have been on the side of the *status quo*, and have claimed to be defending the Church. Liberal churchmen, however, have, as a rule, been faithful to their party, and, as they themselves would say, also faithful to their Church. In other matters, such as Licensing Reform, and Temperance questions generally, Lord Peel, the late Archbishop Temple, and other prominent churchmen, have taken active and important progressive parts.

In strictly Church matters, such as the Pluralities Acts Amendment Act, it cannot be said that churchmen generally, as such, on either side of the House, have taken any real interest. Nor in any one of these instances can it be seriously alleged that their membership of the Church of England has produced any marked effect in sending votes over from

the Liberal benches into the lobby of their opponents.

There have, on the other hand, been instances, not a few, in which the Nonconformist vote has been almost solid without reference to party, if not quite, upon occasions when it has appeared that some principle, upon religious or other grounds, dear to them, was at stake.

When, therefore, we look back over the long list of subjects which, during the three generations covered by the life of the Liberal party (as successors to the Whigs), have divided the Houses of Parliament upon party lines, it is not easy to see why membership of the Church of England should have been so constantly taken to imply membership of the Tory party, nor why it is so rare, comparatively, to find a member of the Liberal party taking an interest in Church questions.

It would have seemed, *a priori*, probable that, in proportion to the zealously of his churchmanship, a member of the Church of

England would be anxious to turn the whole force of the Church in the direction of social improvement, in furtherance of the kingdom of God upon earth. Instead of that, we find in popular phraseology such sarcasms as "Beer and Bible." We find the influence of the Church described as reactionary with regard to education. We find the Christian Social Union instituted within the Church to teach churchmen their duty upon social subjects. We find the mass of the country clergy voting at elections for the Conservative candidates, and it is usually taken for granted that a Liberal will be "unsound" upon Church questions. In all ordinary University controversy the influence of the mass of clerical M.A's. has been not only Conservative, but obstructive.

A fair instance of the ordinary course of things illustrative of the above anomaly may be found in what, not many years ago, occurred with reference to elementary schools. It had become matter of common knowledge,

and no matter of surprise, that the voluntary schools of which the vast majority were Church of England schools, were very much worse equipped all round than what were then called Board schools. The minister in charge of education at the time thought it his duty, as it clearly was, in justice to the children attending these "Church" schools, to insist that the schools they attended should be brought into line with the Board or Undenominational schools. He was at once assailed in every possible way as an enemy to Church schools, and as being determined to crush them out of existence. He was comforted, however, by a very great multitude of letters of thanks from clergymen and others interested in Church schools, many of whom informed him that, until the pressure so applied had begun to be severely felt, they had never been able to stir up churchmen to their responsibility to the children in attendance at their schools ; but that, under the influence of that pressure, the money had flowed in much more freely in

support of the Church schools. In point of fact, the very churchmen who were the loudest in their denunciation of a policy devised in the interest of the children attending the Church schools were those who themselves, by their own neglect, had shown their indifference to that interest.

But it is perhaps natural, and in the ordinary course only what we have to expect, that in the case of questions like the Abolition of Tests, which, as they only operate upon honest men, are useless for the purpose for which they are imposed, or, like the Abolition of Compulsory Church Rates, which was intended to mitigate the feeling of injustice that was rankling in the hearts of Nonconformists, the more slowly-moving among the minds of churchmen and of politicians would be found moving together.

But no Liberal churchman can have doubted for a moment that in supporting these and other such reforms he was voting in the true interests of the National Church. Many very earnest churchmen have felt that on great

questions, such as the attitude of Great Britain in the face of Europe in regard to the problems that have arisen in the East, or on such questions as Arbitration (as in the settlement of the Alabama claims), the earliest possible cessation of hostilities (as after Majuba Hill), the outbreak of the South African War, the granting of the Transvaal Constitution, and the recognition of General Botha, their right place was in the Liberal ranks.

And upon Domestic subjects, such as Temperance, the Housing of the Working Classes, the strict administration of the Public Health Acts, and many of the minor topics of social legislation, it would seem that, so far as religious considerations go, *i.e.* so far as membership of the National branch of the Church of Christ counts in politics at all, it should count on the side of reform of abuses rather than on the recognition and protection of vested interests.

Upon the great and wide subject of financial policy is there any question that, as regards the great masses of the population, the Liberal

principles upon which during the last half century our financial policy has been based, have resulted in a vast increase of comfort, especially among the poorer classes? The purchasing power of their wages has been greatly increased; their standard of living has risen; there is less pauperism and more thrift. Is there any question that, by the application to finance of those Liberal principles, we have minimised the chances of political corruption and selfish interaction of separate interests, commonly called "log-rolling"?

At any rate, is there anything in attachment to the Church of England which should make a member of the National Church, as such, hesitate to ally himself with the party which resolutely adheres to Liberalism in such matters?

And even upon the vexed question of Education, which at the present time occupies so large a space in the public mind, there is already ample evidence that a considerable number of strong and earnest churchmen are

agreed that the safety and permanence of any settlement, and the interests of both education and religion depend, not upon the maintenance as far as possible of the *status quo*, nor upon the recognition of claims based even upon recent history, but upon the steady and equitable application of those principles which constitute Liberalism, and upon which all progress, educational and otherwise, have been based.

If the principles of the Sermon on the Mount are to guide our political, our commercial, and our public life; if our institutions are for the realisation of principles; if the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; why need any member of the Church of England hesitate to ally himself with the Liberal party? Are not the principles of one the principles also of the other?

These are the words of the Right Hon. H. H. Asquith, K.C., M.P., about the State<sup>1</sup>:  
“The proposals of Liberalism are fruits; the

<sup>1</sup> *Liberalism : its Principles and Proposals*, by H. L. Samuel, with introduction by Right Hon. H. H. Asquith, K.C., M.P.

principles of Liberalism are branches, which are supported and nourished by a single stem. The ideas expressed on the platform, and the bills introduced into Parliament, are not an opportunist collection of unconnected schemes, each advocated because it happens to be popular with some section of electors. They all originate in one motive, and spring from one essential doctrine. If we try to express that doctrine in a single sentence, we shall best formulate it perhaps in these words: *That it is the duty of the State to secure to all its members, and all others whom it can influence, the fullest possible opportunity to lead the best life.*"

And these are the words of Bishop Westcott about the Church :

"We have in England that which gives completeness to our national life, a National Church as the spiritual organ of the nation, a Church which has shaped popular aspirations and welcomed popular influences ; a Church which has again and again proved its power to assimilate new truths, and to awaken dormant

forces ; a Church which in great crises has been able to reconcile order with progress ; a Church which has used, and with quickened devotion is striving to use, great possessions and great place, so as to bind all classes together more closely in the unity of one life, and to offer in all its freedom and grace a Gospel to the poor.”

“ . . . . The Church is called to inspire all its members with devotion to public service, and to bring them personally once again under the invigorating influence of a disciplined life.”

“ . . . . The National Church should recognise the duty of facing the problems of English society and English private life, with all their consequences.”<sup>1</sup>

Surely the members of a Church thus described by one of the most eminent of her recent bishops should be able to find in Liberalism the expression of their political faith, and to feel themselves in accord with the other members of the Liberal party.

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Aspects of Life*, by the late Bishop of Durham, 1897.

# SOCIAL LIBERALISM

OR

## LIBERAL THEOLOGY AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

BY

THE REV. A. J. CARLYLE

WE have in theology passed beyond the stage in which men thought that there was nothing to do but to clear away some lumber and the truth would stand out. We have all come to learn that construction is even more necessary than the mere removal of the superfluous ; for the living spirit not only casts off the worn-out vesture of past time, but must clothe itself anew in the forms appropriate to its own growth and to its new surroundings.

It is time that religious men should understand that this holds in respect of the organised

life of society just as much as of the forms of religious belief and action. It would be a sorry spectacle if we were to see men who have done something to vindicate liberty in religion, and have begun to face the urgent need of positive construction, refuse to face the fact that the forms of human life and of the organisation of society must change, and that the new desires and ideals of men must find for themselves new modes of expression in social organisation.

There is nothing clear and plain to the serious student of history if it is not this, that the social movement of our time rests upon a new apprehension of the real quality and character of human nature, which is at least as important and as significant as are the new developments in the intellectual world. The critics of the modern social movements who denounce these as the expression of a mere materialism are surely the most inept, the most incapable of observers and thinkers. It argues but a small intelligence if men cannot penetrate behind the material demands of modern Social-

ism to the moral and spiritual apprehensions which lie behind them, if they cannot see that these demands are in large measure the results of a new sense of the equal value and dignity of human life, of the need of making real the brotherhood of humanity, of the need of the extension of the sovereignty of justice from the political to the social and industrial sphere, and if they cannot understand that the demand for the "common control" is the form, on the one hand, of the experience which has taught Western civilisation the need of self-government, and, on the other, of the principle that in true life every man must take his share in the determination of his own fate, and cannot submit to a government which comes from outside, however well meant, however sympathetic, however intelligent.

Freedom, justice, brotherhood, equality, these are the master principles of the revolt of the Proletariat, and surely they are also the principles, the first and rudimentary principles, of the doctrine of Christ.

Liberalism in religion and in society has meant, in the first place, the revolt against worn-out forms and methods of life, against the superstitions which would serve to smother life in the forms which it has itself produced, but which, just because they are forms of the living spirit and not of mere dead matter, must be perpetually renewed and constantly modified ; and, still more profoundly, it represents the eternal revolt of the Divine spirit in man against an authority which is imposed from outside, which has ceased to represent the living self-determination of the free children of God. Revolt against a worn-out and merely external authority has been, and necessarily has been, the first stage in the reform of religion and of life. But revolt is not life ; revolt is only the expression of a living power breaking the bonds which are smothering it. Life itself is not negative, but positive ; life is not anarchy, but order ; or rather, to put the matter more justly, revolt against order is not liberty. Liberty is true order, obedience to the true law,

the true authority, the true law and authority which come from within, not merely from without.

The Liberal has understood this in politics, and destroyed the old authorities only to substitute for them self-government, the "common control," in place of government by external authority; but he has to learn a greater faith in his own principles, to understand that the "common control" which he has successfully applied to the political organisation has now to be extended to the industrial organisation. And surely the religion of the freedom of the sons of God will not fail to understand that the Christian man is freed, not that he may live in brutish and immoral isolation, but that he may find his true liberty in the free self-determination of the whole body of his equal brothers; the Christian man who understands the meaning of the indissoluble unity of the members in the one body of Christ will also, must also, come to understand the unity of human life in the one body of the

Divine Society of the state ; must understand that the freedom of man means, not the anarchical independence of the individual, but the full development of the individual, under the term of the self-determining co-operation of all the individuals in the society, which exists for all, and whose function it is to preserve and achieve the fullest development of each.

Political freedom was the first aspiration of men under the terms of the new apprehensions of human nature ; the revolution which has established constitutional or democratic government in the civilised world was not founded merely on the incapacity or injustice of the old governing classes, but at least as much upon the fact that first the middle classes, and then the great slave class which survives in the modern world as the proletariat, have become conscious of the fact that they are men and not children, men and not mere slaves ; and that for good or evil, whether in the individual life, or in the life of society, men

must determine their own fates ; the appearance of the Labour party in England and in the other civilised countries is only the most recent phase in the development of the claim that men shall govern themselves.

Men demand freedom in society, not merely because without it there is no security for good government, but because without freedom, without self-determination, a man is not a man ; the demand for political freedom rests upon the gradual apprehension of a principle which is true in religion and in philosophy.

But the demand for political and social freedom after all rests upon a great assumption, the assumption of equality. As long as it was possible for great thinkers like Aristotle to argue that men were naturally and fundamentally unequal, it was impossible to assert that men deserved freedom. The Aristotelian defence of slavery rested upon the argument that only some men possessed reason in such a sense as to be capable of self-government, self-determination, while the rest possessed only

enough reason to be able to follow it in others. The Aristotelian theory, although contradicted by some contemporary thinkers, rested upon the observation of the actual contrast between the Hellenic and the Oriental nations, and was not wholly unreasonable. Aristotle thought he saw, did actually see, that the Oriental in his intellectual and in his political life was servile, unfree.

But Aristotle was none the less completely wrong, and we can recognise the source of his mistake without any difficulty. He looked only at the actual, the existing temper of the barbarian; he did not take account of his potential capacities. He took the existing fact for an eternal fact. And within two centuries his theory was blown to the winds by the experience of the Hellenic world. These naturally unreasonable Orientals, these barbaric Westerns proved themselves to be capable of learning what the Greek had to teach, and one barbaric race proved to be the superior of the Greek in the great art of

government. The Aristotelian doctrine of the fundamental inequality of human nature was reduced to an absurdity by the experience of the Macedonian and Roman Empires; and the later philosophic systems of the ancient world accordingly repudiated it with an emphasis which the most modern revolutionary has not surpassed; and the great phrases of Cicero and Seneca are re-echoed in the Roman jurisprudence. The intense nationalism of the Jews, which also had expressed itself in the parallel doctrine of the indifference of God to all outside of the privileged nation, had been in some measure corrected by the insight of the great prophets who had seen, with more or less clearness, that all human nature was related to God. When Jesus Christ therefore and His Apostles proclaimed the doctrine that all men are equally capable of the Divine life, of union with God in Christ, they were ratifying the experience of the world.

And when Robert Burns threw the whole humane doctrine of the Revolution into "A

man's a man for a' that," he was re-stating for Christian men their own truth, their own doctrine, the foundation of their conception of life, the doctrine of the equal dignity, the equal moral capacity, the equal value of human nature.

This doctrine of equality is the fundamental Christian doctrine of human nature, and it is also the first spring of the revolt of the proletariat. Freedom is a great word, but the claim of freedom rests upon equality, and freedom is the method of realisation of equality. A freedom which merely reduces human life to a blind struggle between forces has no relation to equality, and is, in fact, the denial of it. Equality demands the substitution of the "common control" of the self-governing community for the licensed domination of force.

Christianity, therefore, unites with Socialism in demanding such an organisation of society as will provide the equal children of God with the opportunity of making real their fundamentally equal capacity for the highest

forms of human life. Christianity denounces with Socialism the conditions of life which impoverish, which brutalise human nature. Christianity denounces with Socialism that organisation of industrial society which makes the vast majority of mankind little better than the instruments of profit for the small minority who hold in their hands the means of production.

There are some persons so ignorant of history, so unconscious of the nature of the civilisation in which they live, as to say that this doctrine of equality may be very pleasant in sound, but that it is in contradiction to the hard facts of every-day life, which take no account of it. These good people forget the elementary facts of the society in which they live, are ignorant of the first and elementary principles of the constitutional organisation of our own great country, do not understand that the constitutional machinery of the English state has been built up upon this very principle of the equal right of all citizens before the law, and of the equal capacity of all citizens to take their share

in the "common control." It is just because we recognise that equal capacity gives all men an equal right to a share in political authority that we have slowly built up, through the labour of a thousand years, the political liberties of the English people. These persons say that equality is a Utopian dream! It is really the foundation of the elementary political organisation of the civilised world; and those races or nations, like the Russian, which refuse to recognise this, do so only because they are still more than half barbaric and savage.

If the people of our country are equal to the burden of their own great national destiny, is there really any person who will seriously contend that they are not equal to take their share in the common control of the industrial machinery of society?

But, again, the Christian Church proclaims brotherhood as the first principle of the cohesion and co-operation of men in society; brotherhood, co-operation, and not competition; and

what Christ said, nineteen hundred years ago, the French Revolution has placarded on the streets and public buildings of France; and the modern socialist proclaims it, with a new emphasis and a new significance, for he urges that it is exactly the competitive character of industrial society which is the main cause of the miseries and inequalities of the material conditions of human life. The Christian must agree with the socialist in condemning an organisation of society which runs counter to the great principle of the Christian life, the principle that men are bound together in the one body of Christ, and are bound to strive as much for the good of their fellows as for their own. That is, the doctrine of Christ compels us to condemn an organisation of society in which men are compelled to be enemies of each other, in which man is set against man, and class against class.

Here, again, our friends who claim to be the representatives of common-sense interpose with the argument, that while it may be lamented

that human life is governed by competition rather than by brotherliness, this is an inexorable necessity of human circumstance, that brotherhood or co-operation is a merely Utopian conception, and has no relation to the actual world. But surely this is to ignore the actual facts of the development of civilised society, to ignore the elementary principles which govern the structure and which have determined the progress of the political organisations of the West. The serious student of the history of institutions is always aware of the fact that, behind the infinite complexity of the progress of the constitutional machinery, there lies the perpetual effort of men to find such a reasonable order as will secure the due and harmonious co-operation of the various elements which constitute a political or national society, which will secure that the individual forces may not run riot in a blind and endless struggle against each other, but may be so co-ordinated as to serve to the well-being and progress of the whole society. The primitive

group, whether the horde or the family or the clan, was held together by the operation of instinctive and hardly reasoned impulses of affection or tradition. The original group, whatever it was, represented a unity of co-operating individuals. Gradually this unconscious or instinctive co-operation passed away, but the larger aggregations of the political societies of history are not based upon the destruction of the principles of co-operation; they also are co-operative associations, but their co-operative character has to be maintained and developed by means of a deliberate and determined effort to find the methods and forms under which this may be secured. The history of the organisation of the modern Western nations can only be rightly apprehended as a gradual development of the methods of co-operation.

All these principles of liberty, of equality, of co-operation are summed up in the great, the supreme principle of organised society, the principle of Justice. If Christian men are

asked to join the socialist in his denunciation of the modern industrial system, it is, above all, because the industrial system is organised upon the principle of force and not of justice, because it flaunts and sets at nought the first principle of political morality, as well as the first principle of the Christian conception of the relation of man to man.

The conditions which determine the remuneration of the wage-earner are conditions governed by force, not by justice. It is economic weakness which compels the wage-earning class to accept individually so small a share in the total product of industry ; while it is his economic power which enables the owner of capital, often with hardly any labour on his own part, to take so large a share. If it is true even of the artisan that his share is so small because of his economic weakness, this is still more evidently true of that great class whose wages are only just above the minimum necessary for the maintenance of life, and of that large class which cannot, as a matter of

fact, earn, through the labour of the proper wage-earner of the family, enough to maintain the family. This class is compelled to eke out its miserably insufficient wage by driving out into the labour market, first its women, the wives and mothers of the labourer, and then its children, not only when they prematurely leave school, only half-developed, not yet physically capable of labour, and therefore to grow up again into a new generation of under-paid labour, but even its little children before they have left school, stealing from them, owing to their miserable necessities, the few hours of play and even the necessary hours of sleep.

It is force and not justice, blind, monstrous, inhuman force which governs industrial society. It is as though the industrial classes were the prey of some blind giant who holds in his clutches the lives, the honour, the souls of men and women and children. And we must change this. We must find some means by which we may subject these economic

forces to the principles of justice, some means by which we may substitute a reasoned and moral order for the blind collision of unmoral forces. The history of civilised society is the history of the continuous effort to compel the strong to respect the needs, the rights of the weak, to substitute justice for force as the determining principle of the political order; and what we have striven to do, and in some measure have succeeded in doing in the political order, we must carry out in the industrial.

I would end as I began, the Liberal movement in religion and theology must pass from the merely critical and destructive phase to the effort after construction, to the apprehension of the positive truths of God in Christ redeeming the world, on which the religious life of men is to be nourished; it was necessary to throw aside what seemed to be superstition, to vindicate the liberty of the religious temper; but it is upon positive faith that men live, and the Christian faith is the faith of the union of man

with the life of God through Jesus Christ His Son.

And so also in the political and social or economic sphere, it is not enough to vindicate the principle of liberty, or rather it is necessary that we should understand that liberty is found not in anarchy but in the just order. For the true development of the individual is not found in the isolation of the separate life ; but only under the terms of some real unity between the individual life and the universal ; man does not become human as he separates himself from God, or from his fellows, but only as he enters into communion with the life of God and with the lives of his brother men.

## PAST LIBERALISM

BY

THE MASTER OF THE TEMPLE

It will be some time yet before any attempt can be made to write the history of the Liberal movement which took place within the Church of England during the nineteenth century. That movement has already passed through more than one phase of development, and it may be that further transformation lies before it. Who shall venture just now to forecast its future? Even in its relation to the past we cannot yet see it in its true perspective. Its history, when written, will have to exhibit its connection not merely with contemporary English politics, but with the corresponding intellectual and religious movements in other European countries. In this briefest of sketches

no attempt can be made to trace such influences, or even to summarise results, except provisionally. It must be content merely to state a few facts about a few personalities, now perhaps not so well known as they used to be, such as may be found in the biographies of the time or can be supplied by the memory of living people. No inconsiderable share in the movement has been taken by lay members of the Church, but the work done by the clergy themselves has been still more important, and this alone can be treated in the allotted space.

## I

Before me, as I write, lies a printed copy of a sermon on 'Toleration, preached by Sydney Smith at the Temple Church in 1807, just before the anonymous publication of the *Peter Plymley Letters*. This date may serve for a starting-point. Sydney Smith cannot, indeed, take rank as one of the great leaders of modern Liberal Churchmanship. His theology re-

flected the school of Paley, while his ecclesiastical views are indicated by the epigram that he regarded the Established Church as a branch of the Civil Service. But he belonged to a generation which was beginning to face the question whether men ought to be put under disabilities because they did not belong to the Anglican Church, and on that question he did good pioneer work. The *Plymley Letters* were issued twenty-two years before Dr Arnold and Bishop Stanley published their pamphlets on Roman Catholic Emancipation. It is this priority which gives Sydney Smith his importance. We sometimes forget now what the position of Roman Catholics and other Nonconformists was before Emancipation. In the land of their birth they were virtually to a great extent aliens. Political and municipal office, sometimes even professional careers, were closed to them. An annual Indemnity Act alone secured to them the elementary rights of citizenship. Restrictions hampered their marriages and their

funerals. They could not send their sons to the Universities. Their loyalty—very possibly with justice—was suspected by the Government, while their beliefs were disliked and despised by a compact mass of public opinion around them. We all know what has happened since 1807. Let us remember the debt of gratitude due to that small minority of the English clergy which for many years, under much discouragement, fought the battle of religious freedom against Church privilege.

Generations are somewhat vague measures of time, but as we look back over the past century we may roughly distinguish three generations of Liberal leaders among the clergy of the Anglican Church. (1) What may be called Arnold's generation ranges from Sydney Smith, born in 1771, to Arnold himself, born in 1795, and Baden Powell, born in 1796. Its work was mainly done before 1842—when Arnold died. (2) The generation of F. D. Maurice and Arthur Stanley succeeded, and carried on its work into the seventies or

later. The birth dates of H. B. Wilson, Maurice, Pattison, Stanley, Colenso, Robertson, Jowett, Rowland Williams, Charles Kingsley and Temple, all fall within eighteen years (1803–1821). A later group within this generation includes, among others, Farrar and Hatch, and at least one surviving veteran. (3) The work of the last thirty years has been chiefly done by men who are still living, and cannot be treated here.

Arnold is unmistakably the central figure of his generation, but with him may be named two other fellows of Oriel,—Whately, afterwards Archbishop of Dublin, and Hampden, afterwards Bishop of Hereford. Nothing marks more clearly the intellectual pre-eminence of the Oriel common-room in those days than the fact that out of it, within a few years, proceeded the guiding spirits of two great parties in the Anglican Church. Unlike Newman and his colleagues, Arnold had little influence at Oxford and organised no systematic movement. A small group of

Liberal clergy at Cambridge, described by Dean Stanley as "equal rather than like," included Thirlwall, afterwards Bishop of St David's, Whewell, and Sedgwick. Archdeacon Julius Hare was on terms of friendship with Arnold, and another Cambridge friend was Dean Stanley's father, who, when appointed Bishop of Norwich, nominated Arnold to preach his consecration sermon. Requested by the Primate to find another preacher, the Bishop refused, and the sermon was preached by one of the Archbishop's chaplains. Arnold's unpopularity among the clergy was then (1837) at its height. Shortly before his death, when he returned to Oxford as professor of history, animosities had softened, and he was received with more cordiality. Had he survived Newman's secession, his influence might have become greater, though never commanding. What would have been his attitude, if he had lived longer, towards the Biblical Criticism which was beginning to assert itself in Germany? His letters

contain a hostile reference to Strauss, whose *Leben Jesu* was published in 1835. On the other hand, in following Niebuhr he had accepted in germ the principles of modern criticism. His position at Rugby did not actually hamper his freedom of thought, but some collision was inevitable. A vehement article on the Hampden controversy, which Stanley, then an undergraduate, deplored, nearly brought about the censure of his Governing Body and his consequent resignation. This would have been a pity, from a party point of view, for though his work absorbed energies which might otherwise have been spent on ecclesiastical and theological questions, Rugby was a Liberalising element in the country. Arnold's strong personality, coupled with the deep spiritual sensitiveness which his diary discloses, created among his pupils a special type of character, broad-minded and religious. "One of Arnold's men" was a common phrase at the Universities in those days. The fact that Stanley and others be-

came his spiritual heirs did much to lessen to the Liberal party in the Church the loss suffered by Arnold's premature death.

The generation which followed had more than one leader. In the forefront of a remarkable group of Liberal churchmen, stands F. D. Maurice, who was only ten years younger than Arnold. We all remember Kingsley's description of Maurice as "the most beautiful human soul" that he had ever met. That moral and spiritual beauty, coupled with a restless energy and great intellectual subtlety, exerted a deep influence on his generation. Maurice was in no sense a party-leader. His son tells us that he thought parties in the Church—sectarianism of any kind—an evil so grave that nothing could excuse the organisation of a new party. He occupied therefore, and was content to occupy, an isolated position. For all his genuine humble-mindedness he was singularly independent in forming his opinions. If it is true, as Stanley said after his death, that every wave of thought which passed over

Europe left its mark on Maurice's mind and spirit, it is also true that he was little influenced by other men. As he was no party-leader, so he was no party-follower. He was no respecter of persons. He could not always see eye to eye with men whose opinions were often confounded with his own by the outside world. The breadth of "Broad Churchmen" (a term which he disliked) often seemed to him to be narrowness. He criticised Arnold freely. Even with Julius Hare, his loved brother-in-law, he felt that he was not in complete accord about the position of the English Church. His personal regard and admiration for Stanley were great, but their views on many points were wide apart. With Kingsley he was in closer though not complete touch; but he had to part company with Sterling, and he felt bound, at the cost of great distress of mind, to express disapproval of his old friend Colenso. With the academic type of Liberalism he had little in common. From Jowett he said that he differed almost as widely as

from Mansel. Yet, in spite of all this divergence from friends and natural allies, he stood by each in turn at times of unpopularity and persecution. Not so much because he had himself suffered, but for the sake of religious freedom he championed causes which he could not always approve. He protested against the claim of the Bishop of Cape Town to exercise spiritual jurisdiction over Colenso; he had a controversy with Pusey about the persecution of Jowett; he was full of indignation at the attacks on Robertson after the publication of his *Life and Letters*. It was not, perhaps, always easy for Maurice's friends to understand his position. He felt himself that he was liable to be "disclaimed as a muddy mystic." But the spirit which animated his life has borne much fruit since his death. He represents that interesting and important type of Liberal Churchmanship which clings with loyalty to disputed doctrines and sees new depths of meaning in the old formularies.

Few people could have personally known

Pattison and Jowett in their later years without feeling in how real a sense their theological opinions were part of them. As one listened to their talk that thought was constantly present in the background. The religious history of their lives had been very different. Jowett's point of view had altered but little. Pattison's theology had gradually shaped itself out of a widening philosophical outlook. He has himself traced the process in his outspoken *Memoirs*. For some ten years he had been under Newman's influence; and when that influence ceased, in 1845, there was a strong reaction from the effect of what he afterwards called "the clerical virus." We trace the trend of his mind through the years which followed in his mention of a course of lectures attended by him at Heidelberg, the aim of which was to unite the utmost liberty of philosophical thought with Christian dogma. "Slowly and in many years" he passed "to that highest development, where all religions appear in their historical light." One result of the

storm that raged over *Essays and Reviews* (to which his own contribution was a solid piece of historical investigation) was that he deliberately gave up writing on theology and church history. We have thus lost a series of studies on the movement of theological sentiment in modern Europe, such as he alone could have produced. The sermons which, on rare occasions, he preached before the University, interesting as they were, did not compensate for this. General literature, however, gained what theology lost. Pattison's special contribution to Anglican Liberalism was the ideal of learning which he held before the Church. He had not the gifts needed for building up an ecclesiastical policy or for the practical adjustment of conflicting beliefs. His attitude towards life was critical rather than constructive. His influence was not so much widely diffused as intense in its effect on a certain type of temperament. The pessimism and cynicism which he never concealed, though stimulating to some minds, were

certainly distasteful to others. But his brilliant intellect and a magnetic power in his manner impressed everyone, and in his insistence on the importance of a scientific theology to the Church of England he did work that was needed.

The contrast between Jowett and Pattison was strongly marked. Jowett's influence was wider, his religious teaching was more direct and human, and the genial cynicism which in his later years sometimes gave savour to his talk was tempered not merely by his optimism but by his real natural piety. He never, like Pattison, viewed the Church of England with a dispassionate air, as though from outside. One of his biographers even describes him as seeing in the Church, could she but know the things belonging to her peace, the best hope for the future of Christianity. No doubt Jowett's interpretation of Church reform, and his conception of the meaning of Christianity, would have been rejected by the majority of his clerical contemporaries; but his views—

difficult as it might be to put them into definite and systematic shape—appealed to successive generations of young men at Balliol and elsewhere, with results which are still traceable in the Church. This was largely due to the force of his personality. He was like no other man in his silences and pithy sayings. His influence was naturally augmented by the ignoble persecution carried on for many years, which few people now would probably attempt to excuse. The “heretical” essays on *The Atonement* and *The Interpretation of Scripture* raised questions on which there has since been a decided advance of thought among churchmen of unquestioned orthodoxy. This fact justifies Jowett’s own statement about the essays that their chief interest was that they came a little before their time. None the less the iron entered into his soul. With all his courage and tenacity of purpose he had a sensitive nature, and the thought that words written in the cause of truth and justice had been received as heretical and

mischievous doctrines caused him lasting pain. There seems much truth in the view that if the essays had been received with greater fairness and charity, "the positive side of his convictions would have gained strength through sympathy, and he would have put forward his conclusions as the development and extension of received truth, not as a criticism upon its previous expression." The "Life of Christ," which Jowett had hoped to write, remained an unfulfilled project; and it is from the sermons of his later life, delivered in Balliol Chapel and Westminster Abbey, that we have to gather his final message to his generation. A study of them shows more definiteness of belief than many people are apt to attribute to him, though his religious teaching will perhaps live mainly in the form of aphorisms. Its force at present is certainly far from spent. Many thoughtful people still find it a help to recall the spirit in which he dealt with modern difficulties—a spirit which finds its expression in his prediction fifty years ago that "the criti-

cisms of the present day will at first be felt as a blow to faith, but they will issue in its fuller establishment; all that is important will survive." His theological position has been called a compromise between his critical instincts and his religious feeling. But it is perhaps a truer view which regards him as taking "high rank among the Whigs of Religion—among those who, Conservatives in the true sense, have averted revolution by making timely concessions."

Kingsley, as a young man, was closely associated with Maurice in his attempt to promote Christian Socialism, and retained through life the warmest admiration for his "master." When *Yeast* was on the point of appearing, his comment on it was: "I think this will explain a good deal of Maurice." But Kingsley's great literary gifts and his variety of interests forbid his being classed as a mere follower of Maurice. Rarely has a man been more many-sided. He was the Chartist parson of 1848, the "Parson Lot" who sympathised so passion-

ately with working men, the author of *Alton Locke*. "He was a layman in the guise or disguise of a clergyman," said Stanley, alluding to the keenness of his love of sport. He was a student of natural history, with a firm belief in the truth of Evolution and in the duty of the clergy to face scientific facts. He was poet, novelist, and history-professor. He was a good parish priest and a great preacher. His vehemence of spirit led him into exaggerations and mistakes, such as, *e.g.*, his controversy with Newman, but he has been rightly placed among the conspicuous teachers of his age. In spite of the strength of his convictions, Kingsley, like Maurice, was not a party man. He once described himself as "an old-fashioned High Churchman." Was this description meant seriously? It is, at any rate, at variance with the pride which he took in belonging to the Church of England *as by law established*. "These words he was never tired of quoting," says one who knew him well. His sermons at Westminster Abbey, at the close of his life,

attracted many people who were more or less outside the Church of England; but neither in politics nor in theology during those later years could he be reckoned as an advanced Liberal. His religious influence was in the main a personal one, and will not perhaps survive the generation which hung upon his words, though some of his writings will certainly have a longer life.

This short list of selected names must close with that of Stanley. The son of a Whig Bishop, the pupil of Arnold, owing much to Julius Hare, of whom he speaks after Arnold's death as his "living instructor," the intimate friend of Jowett from his undergraduate days and of Maurice soon afterwards, Stanley was early equipped for his life work. Before he was thirty he had published his biography of Arnold. A year or two later, in his sermons on *The Apostolical Age*, he had publicly declared himself in favour of applying the methods of historical criticism to the Bible. His *Commentary on the Epistles to the Cor-*

*inthians* followed, a companion work to Jowett's edition of St Paul's Epistles, though very different in treatment. By the time he was forty he was recognised, along with Maurice and Jowett, as a leader of the Liberal movement in the Church,—later, perhaps, as the commander-in-chief. For this position Stanley had special gifts, which became more strongly marked as time went on. He knew everybody and loved to bring together at Oxford and Westminster people of different and even antagonistic views. He could not indeed persuade Liddon or Pusey or Keble to preach at the Abbey, but his social charm kept him on cordial terms with many men who detested his opinions. After the excitement of a debate in Convocation in which he had fought almost single-handed, he would entertain his antagonists at luncheon with irresistible courtesy. No embitterment of dispute seemed to lessen his width of sympathy. There were few Church controversies in his day in which he did not play a leading part. The

wonder was that his frail physique could stand the constant strain. The censure of Tract 90 and the degradation of W. G. Ward, the later Hampden agitation, the Gorham question, Colenso, *Essays and Reviews*, Ritualism, the Athanasian Creed, Inspiration, Clerical Subscription, the Voysey trial—such were some of the subjects to which he contributed speeches, letters, and articles. He by no means took on all these topics what is ordinarily termed the “Liberal” view. He disliked the purely negative character of Colenso’s criticism; he disapproved of two of the essays in *Essays and Reviews*, to which work he had himself refused to contribute; he had not the slightest sympathy with the point of view of Mr Voysey, who acted throughout in defiance of his advice. But he defended them all when they were attacked, not merely from a chivalrous sense of justice to individuals, but because he felt bound to resist every attempt to narrow unduly the comprehensiveness of the National Church. “A dogmatist in his abhorrence of dogma and

a bigot against intolerance," he detested the spirit of combination for party purposes which was at the bottom of these alternate persecutions by High Church or Low Church. His fearless advocacy of freedom of inquiry in Biblical study was part of the same policy of comprehensiveness. He was not afraid that in the long-run free inquiry would prove to be merely destructive. "For minds constituted on the same historical basis as his own," says his biographer, "though criticism destroyed much, it created more: if it cut away some grounds of faith it refilled the chasm with more stable foundations." His opponents could not feel this faith in the future. Pusey wrote frankly to him in 1864: "I believe the present to be a struggle for the life or death of the English Church, and what you believe to be for life, I believe to be for death." Against this we may set Maurice's estimate of Stanley's work. "Why," asked a friend, "are things tolerated in Stanley which could not be pardoned in anyone else?" "Because," was the

reply, "Stanley has done more to make the Bible a reality in the homes of the people than any living man."

## II

Sydney Smith, Arnold, Maurice, Pattison, Jowett, Kingsley, Stanley—we cannot but be struck with the diversity of the men and of the views which they represent. Had the list been extended, as it well might have been, this would have become still more evident. Though they were animated by a more or less common spirit, not one of them agreed on all points with any of the rest. They differed not merely in details of ecclesiastical policy, but still more in the relative importance which they attached to different questions. That is only another way of saying that the Liberal movement within the Church has been a highly complex one. It presents a tangled skein of theological, ecclesiastical, and social issues, the separate threads of which need to be traced and drawn out. The following is an

extremely brief summary of the lines along which thought has been moving during the first seventy years or so of the nineteenth century.

1. *Toleration*.—The policy of concession which during this period relieved Nonconformists of most of their disabilities was inaugurated by the Test and Corporations Act of 1828 and by Roman Catholic Emancipation in 1829. Subsequently relief was extended to the Jews. Legislation dealt, among other points, with church-rates, with the burial question, and with the permission to substitute affirmation for oath. By the abolition of tests in 1871, the Universities were opened to non-members of the Church of England. Some of us remember what alarmist predictions were expressed at Oxford at the time. As a matter of fact, religious influences are far stronger in the University now than they were thirty or forty years ago.

2. *Christian Socialism*.—Liberal Churchmen have, of course, no claim to the exclusive

possession of this idea, nor is it an essential article of their creed ; but during the Chartist Movement of 1848 and the years which followed, Maurice, Kingsley, and others made great efforts to guide the opinions of the working classes, and to promote a type of socialism on the lines of Christian brotherhood. Their work failed to achieve all that they had hoped. They succeeded, however, in getting an Act passed in 1852, which gave a legal status to co-operative bodies, and the Working Men's College at Great Ormond Street, since transplanted to Crowndale Road, N.W., has been the parent of many similar institutions.

3. *Comprehensiveness*.—The conception of a comprehensive National Church—so dear to Arnold and Stanley—had a twofold bearing on the ecclesiastical situation. On the one hand, as put forward by them, it involved a theory of the Established Church which almost identified it with the State, though from this view Maurice and others would

certainly have withheld their assent. On the other hand, all who desired comprehensiveness were strongly opposed to the spirit which sought to purify the Church by driving out unorthodox opinions. No useful purpose is served by recalling in detail a most unpleasing story of obloquy, prosecution, and persecution. Few Liberal leaders escaped; but, in spite of this, they consistently supported Tractarians and Evangelicals alike—Gorham, or W. G. Ward, or Pusey, as the case might be—whenever attempts were made by either party to drive the other into exile.

4. *Clerical Subscription*.—Opinions differed as to the right policy on this question. Arnold signed the petition in favour of relaxation presented by Whately to the House of Lords in 1840, but was not enthusiastic about it. Jowett, in 1841, was for trying to get the articles simplified: under the existing system a strict construction or an indefinite latitude seemed to him equally impossible. Kingsley, more than twenty years later, “could sign the

articles in their literal sense *toto corde*”; he felt in himself “a capacity for drifting to sea,” which made him “cling nervously to any little anchor, like subscription.” Stanley’s letter to the Bishop of London, in 1863, led to the Act of 1865, subsequently ratified by convocation, which substituted the present form of declaration, with the result that the clergy could no longer fairly be regarded as bound to particular phrases.

5. *Theology and Science*.—Arnold, himself a geologist, shows in his published letters little consciousness of the growing hostility between physical science and theology which marks our period. Some of the earlier crude attempts at reconciliation were examined in the article on Mosaic Cosmogony in *Essays and Reviews*. But an acute stage had been reached before this with the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* in 1859. The meeting of the British Association at Oxford in 1860 brought about a dramatic encounter between Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce, in which the advantage

did not rest with the latter. Few theological developments are more remarkable than the change which afterwards took place in the attitude of the Church towards evolution. Kingsley did something towards this by a lecture at Sion College, in 1871, on the Theology of the Future—of special importance because delivered to a clerical audience. Jowett preached in 1874 a University sermon on the Relations of Science and Religion. Aubrey Moore, who belonged to a later generation and died prematurely only eighteen years ago, also did good work. But the *rapprochement* which seems likely to take place between the theological and the scientific point of view is in the main the work of living men.

6. *Biblical Criticism*.—Only the initial stages of this great movement come within our purview. The foundations were laid before 1880, but critical work in England had hardly begun. Both Jowett and Stanley were early suspected of “Germanism” at Oxford, and the

suspicion was deepened in Stanley's case by his sermons on the Apostolical Age, already mentioned. H. B. Wilson's Bampton Lecture, in 1851, perhaps made the first definite demand for freedom in theological inquiry. Then came *Essays and Reviews*, with the essay by Jowett on the Interpretation of Scripture and that by Rowland Williams on Bunsen's Biblical Researches. Colenso's *Pentateuch*, which appeared in 1862, was not welcomed by Maurice and Stanley. Jowett thought its "tone a good deal mistaken," but felt that "all good persons should agree in heartily sympathising with the effort to state the facts of Scripture exactly as they are." With Mr Voysey, a few years later, Jowett could not feel the same sympathy. Both he and Stanley recommended resignation, but on Mr Voysey's refusal they still gave him their support. The session of the Committee of Revisers (1870-1884) marks the dividing line between the earlier and the later stages of Biblical Criticism.

7. *Doctrine*.—It is only possible here to indicate in the briefest and baldest way one or two lines of thought along which some development of doctrine is traceable. One such was as to the nature of Inspiration. The prevailing of the wider view was attributed by Jowett to Colenso, of whom he wrote, in 1882: "He has made an epoch in criticism by his straightforwardness: no one now talks of verbal inspiration." Another was concerned with the meaning of the Atonement—a discussion with which Jowett's own name is closely connected. Another questioned the literal interpretation of the phrase "everlasting punishment," and with this inquiry we associate the names of Maurice and Farrar. As far back as 1838, Arnold wrote to an old pupil: "I do not believe the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed under any qualification given of them." There is evidence of a widespread movement of thought on these and perhaps on other points during the period which ends with 1880. The result was a gradual and fairly general

acceptance of interpretations which set men's consciences free from the moral difficulties that had burdened them. Past Liberalism in these ways undeniably influenced the development of doctrine within the Church.

It is impossible to sum up with any completeness the work done by these past generations of Liberal Churchmen. The movement goes on without a break, and cannot be divided into sections by arbitrary dates. To try to measure the results achieved thirty years ago is to try to stand still just when the pace was accelerating. But some lessons of the past are obvious, however little they are laid to heart—few perhaps more so than the danger and mistake of religious panics. It was a critical time in the history of the Church when, within a few years, Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Colenso's *Pentateuch*, and *Essays and Reviews* were all violently denounced as destructive of Christianity. The quiet courage with which Jowett and Stanley continued to point out that truth had nothing to fear from

free inquiry saved the situation. Before Jowett's death the tide had begun to turn. The Broad Churchmen of those early fighting days were, as a rule, of a robust type, which was not always beyond criticism. They were sometimes too frankly Erastian to suit modern views. They sometimes let crotchets interfere with united action. Under the stress of controversy they sometimes took too little trouble to appreciate their opponent's case. But many of them had qualities which their successors would do well to carry on—reverence in handling the Bible, carefulness not to go beyond what the evidence warranted, readiness to face attack, a firm trust in the permanent basis of religion, and great spirituality of life. Nor was it the least among their good services that, by occupying an intermediate space between the two extreme parties, they prevented England from becoming, like Belgium, a battle ground on which men have no alternative but to join the ranks of either the *Noirs* or the *Rouges*.

# NONCONFORMIST LIBERALISM

BY

THE REV. PROFESSOR CALDECOTT

How far are our brethren of the Evangelical Churches which we in England call Nonconformist and they are preferring to call Free Churches animated by the Liberal spirit in theology and in organisation which this volume represents? For they, too, know the difference between Conservatism and Liberalism in religion; they have amongst them those who are tenacious of the past, timid as to the future, and those who are somewhat loosening from the past and eager to try vistas as yet unmarked. The greater communities, with which alone space permits me to deal, are the Methodists, the Congregationalists, the Baptists. I should like to include the Presbyterians, but the unmistakeable connection of Presbyterians with

the churches in Scotland gives their history a somewhat different centre of reference from that of the purely English churches ; and within the narrow compass of these pages I think that concentration on the problem as it stands in England is my best course. Nor am I able to take the wider range which would be open if the situation in the Colonies and in America could be included : this would be necessary for a complete survey of the situation ; but the problem must be limited, and I set it simply as it stands between us of the Church of England and the English Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists. Perhaps a brief study of the situation in England will yield suggestions for wider inquiries.

In order to trace recent history, limitation of the number of issues to be considered is imperative, and I have selected the following five :—Holy Scripture, Future Punishment, the relation of Christians to the World, the relation of Christianity to other Religions, and Church Polity.

## I. HOLY SCRIPTURE

1. The attitude to Holy Scripture is of paramount importance to churches which are accustomed to regard it as the only source of Divine knowledge, and therefore as the sole seat of authority in religion. We must ask how they regard it both as to the nature of its authority and as to its structure. Fifty years ago this momentous prerogative was assigned to the Bible as a book ; it was regarded as not only containing the Word of God, but as itself being that Word. It was in 1852 that one of the leading intellects of Congregationalism, Henry Rogers, wrote the *Eclipse of Faith*, in which he expressly contended that a Book-revelation is quite possible, is very useful, and is in analogy with God's dealing with man in other ways. This is the defence which Hutton of the *Spectator* called "the Hard Church" : it was also the method of Archdeacon Lee in the Bampton Lecture of 1854. In a mood far removed from Hard Churchism in

most other ways, the reliance on the book alone, in its totality and in its uncriticised structure, animated the conservatism of the great preacher Charles Spurgeon. He could form no other conception of an authoritative Word of God ; to quit this was to go “down-grade” towards scepticism. As for criticism, he avers, “We will have a whole Bible or no Bible” ; and he has no glimpse of the possibility of a revision of its structure which would be other than destructive. In colleges and in pulpits the Bible was then usually taken not only as infallible authority for doctrine of God, but also as consisting of communications to its writers of knowledge of events past, contemporary, and future ; in important places, at least, the communication extended to words, audible and articulate. And so clear-cut was it as a miracle, that reasons were offered as to why inspiration had ceased with its writers and the enunciation of the Divine message had totally closed.

One of the earliest signs of change in high quarters appears in the *First Principles* of

Baldwin Brown, published in 1881: he saw that change was impending, and for himself is content to claim that the revelation of God is *in* the Bible. In a Symposium arranged by the *Homiletic Magazine* (1884) there appear further indications of emergence from the "hard" position. M'Kennal of Bowdon transfers the expression "Word of God" from the book to its contents; Edward White carries this into detail: it is the constituents of the Bible, and not the Bible as a whole, on which we are to rely: and further, as regards revelation, history is distinguished from doctrine. Gradually it was learned by Congregationalists that the hard view was not really the view of the greater Reformers, but a method adopted some generations afterwards by men seeking for a definite external authority, in face of the external authority claimed by the advocates of the Roman theory of the Church.

Turning to Congregationalist leaders to-day, we find that Dr Garvie takes the witness of Christian experience as the proof of that

authoritativeness of what the Bible contains, reducing all to this. Dr Adeney considers the inner witness of the Spirit to be the Bible's own method of proof: the external methods are "artificial," of Rabbinic kindred: the internal witness is the "scientific" as contrasted with the "orthodox" standpoint; and his colleague at the Lancashire Independent College, Dr Robert Mackintosh, takes the same line. Dr Forsyth thinks that to base religion on the infallibility of a book is a method which is sure to lead to Rome. The manifesto of the twenty Congregationalist leaders, issued in February of this year, says that the Bible is God's book, because it "enshrines" His revelation in Christ and the Gospel. The lay Chairman of the Congregational Union in the current year, after stating the inner witness, says of the older view that it was due to a temporary necessity for strong banks for the channel of revelation, but that now the stream has "broken bounds" and "is spreading into a broad delta of manifestation."

As to the structure of the Bible, Dr Bennett, Dr Gray, Dr Bartlet, and other principal teachers in the Congregationalist colleges, now stand almost solidly with Dr Driver for the Old Testament, and with the scholars of Oxford and Cambridge and Scotland for the New Testament.

For the Baptists, Mr Henderson, Principal of Bristol College, pleads for the retention of the authority of the written word as well as the resort to the inner witness of Scripture and the general experience. But Dr Clifford expressly renounces the proof from the book itself as conceived fifty years ago, and stands upon "the massed experiences of Christian men." This change he considers to be the principal reform in Christian apologetic made since the Reformation. He accepts development within the Bible, but does not specify what scholars he follows.

For the Methodist churches, the Fernley lecturer of 1881 (F. J. Sharr) rejected the appeal to spiritual judgment of the contents

of the Bible as too subjective, and the resort to degrees of inspiration as dangerously going back towards the allegorism of Maimonides. He wholly rejected Kuenen and Wellhausen's reconstructions, and predicted speedy oblivion for them, taking his stand with Ellicott and the *Aids to Faith* conservatism. In 1892, again, the Fernley lecturer (Marshall Randles), with Driver and Dale and Gore and Sanday in view, rejects their positions and argues for the traditional structure of the Bible. He disallows appeal to the witness of experience: if the written book is not authoritative, he does not see how authority could come: "minus the record, how is there any message?" He detects even in Dale a dangerous tendency to substitute ideas for history.

But when we turn to the Methodist leaders of to-day we find appeals to the inner witness and to the testimony of mankind (advocated by Dr Beet in 1884) now in possession in high places. As to structure, in the *London*

*Quarterly Review* of January 1908, Dr Davison shows us much: he does not profess to defend the scientific accuracy of Genesis, the universality of the Deluge, or the literal history of the book of Jonah, and "cannot close his eyes" as to the composite nature of the Gospels. Further, he does not feel bound to accept "the psychology of St Paul in detail," nor to hold that "the Pauline type of teaching is the only one discernible" in the New Testament. The general view of the Bible recommended to candidates for the ministry is that which is expressed in the teaching at Oxford and Cambridge. The theologian of the Primitive Methodists, Dr Peake of Manchester, frankly accepts the reshaping of the Old Testament by Kuenen and Wellhausen, and regards the Messianic prophecies not as specific predictions but as the expressions of a religious patriotism which is looking forward to a righteous nation.

In Wales, if we may for the moment associate with English Methodists the largest Welsh

Church, the Calvinistic Methodists, it was stated in 1898, by two of their leaders, the late Principal Edwards and Mr J. Owen, that the "alarm" caused by the new critical views "has somewhat subsided," and that, though "misgiving" is still felt by many, not a few have publicly accepted the new positions, and that "their number is probably increasing."

## II. FUTURE PUNISHMENT

In the total view of the Future Life we are not in a position to test accord as between Liberal Nonconformists and Liberal Churchmen, for we do not profess to have attained a common doctrine ourselves. But there are two particular features which I think we should now expect to find in any theology which we could call Liberal, viz. (1) acknowledgment that as to the ultimate future of sinners there is room for diversity of opinion, and (2) inability to accept torment as the prominent feature of punishment.

Unqualified statements of the old doctrine

still abound ; but fifty years ago they prevailed not only among Christians of small education but among thoughtful and pious leaders. In some of the principal pulpits of the Church of England the eloquence of a Henry Melvill was employed to express the unmitigated gloom and misery of an endless Hell. In the chief Congregationalist pulpit in Yorkshire lamentations over the inevitable calamity of the lost were wrung from the refined and generous mind of Robert Hamilton of Leeds. But as in the Church of England so among Congregationalists emergence from these forebodings of gloom was arising. Dr Pye Smith, from whose mind definitions and dogmas flowed in copious streams, yet paused here, and qualified his following of Calvin by the quiet declaration that Calvin should have kept to the positive side of his doctrine, the future of the elect, and not have professed to know so much of the condition of the lost ; it was Calvin's " chief fault " to treat Reprobation and Punishment as if they were as clearly revealed

to us in the Christian dispensation as Election and Salvation are.

In the reaction some Congregationalists proceeded not to claim freedom but to offer definite counter-doctrines in the forms of Conditional Immortality or of Universalism. Notable was the vehement advocacy of the former as "life in Christ" only, by Edward White, accepted by Dale. Universalism was advanced chiefly in America, but it had its advocates among English Congregationalists, notably Baldwin Brown.

To-day what we find is the claim to be at liberty to decline the formulation of a definite view. We find, for example, that Dr Garvie does not agree that either Conditionalism or Universalism is disclosed in Scripture; he is for continuity as between this life and the next, and cannot see more than that. Dr Adeney thinks that in the New Testament the continuance of the impenitent is contemplated, but that it also contains hints of possible destruction, and also suggestions of Universal-

ism, especially in St Paul's writings, and that the only Punishment thought of may be corrective in its nature. Dr Morgan Gibbon is more definite as to Punishment : he holds that it cannot be torment and that it cannot be everlasting. In the February manifesto of the twenty Congregationalist leaders all definition on this head is avoided : the reference made is limited to the broad word, "ruin." Dr Tymms, late Principal of Rawdon Baptist College, holds that the infliction of a penal suffering which prolongs sin is inconceivable ; and that, while we cannot prove either Conditionalism or Universalism to be the means, yet the ultimate extermination of sin is "rooted in a necessity of the Divine nature."

The Wesleyan Methodists still print in their Catechisms selections of the severer texts, and leave them in isolation from others of different bearing, and the inference seems to be that this method still prevails in their preaching and teaching. Dr Beet, we know, has long laboured for freedom : he does not find either

Conditionalism or Universalism proved in Scripture, yet he is unable to express Future Punishment in the old way. The reception of his efforts, as appeared in the published account of the Conference in which they were debated, indicates that the Wesleyan Church is not yet prepared to follow his lead.

Among Primitive Methodists, whatever be the attitude of the main body, their foremost teacher, Dr Peake, publicly announces that "he has broken"—nay, he says "*we* have broken"—"with very much in the old-fashioned views": he pleads, like Dr Garvie, for continuity between this life and the next, and thinks that the difficulties against Universalism have been exaggerated.

In the Free Church Catechism composed by representatives of Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists (with others), it is the omissions, on this as on some other great issues, which are noteworthy. Attention is confined to the destiny of believers: the destiny of believers is a dogma, but neither penal suffer-

ing nor any means of the ultimate victory of righteousness is alluded to. The implication rather lies in the direction of Conditional Immortality being the doctrine underlying the agreement to confine dogmatic expression to the future of believers ; but perhaps it is more true to the situation to consider that freedom of belief as to the future of the impenitent is the intention of the Catechism.

### III. THE CHURCHES AND THE WORLD

It will not be gainsaid that the Nonconformist churches of fifty years ago shared with the Evangelicals in the Church of England the view that the aim of religion was to bring men out of an opposing world. The world was regarded as under hostile powers : its business was at best a temporal necessity, its amusements were anti-spiritual : a line between the secular and the religious was very sharply drawn. Even public affairs were not looked upon as very becoming for souls engaged above all things in preparation for eternity.

Parliament was perhaps worthy, with the Army and Navy and Civil Service. But local government was mainly in the hands of men who had no hearts for religion, and it had fallen into the degradation which excited the satire of Thackeray and the detestation of Dickens. As Dr M'Kennal put it, "There were humane men and women, beautifully humane, among both the rich and the poor; but of humanity in legislation and administration we never heard." For human feeling the outlet was charity, and that was a fountain which never ran dry: but it was individualistic in its conception, and the churches as such exhorted to its exercise, but took little organised part in it themselves.

Two other essays in this volume draw attention to the change of attitude that has come over the Church of England: how does it stand with the Nonconformist Churches?

In the first place, their leading theologians now mark with emphasis the ethical and social character of the Gospel. It has profound

concern with the world: it must enter into the secular domain, ethically even if not politically, and permeate its life with Christian principles. References are scarcely necessary: the way in which Dr Fairbairn draws his philosophy of the Christian religion to a culmination in an ethical mission is followed up by Dr Garvie in his brief but forcible presentation of what is "the Gospel for to-day." The manifesto of the 'Twenty, when it has defined the Church, immediately adds that to it "is committed the task of transforming the world, morally and socially, into the Kingdom of God."

A Baptist thinker, Mr Medley, late of Rawdon College, claims that "it is surely possible for a Christian man to be at home and free in every sphere of human interest, and to find all sacred." No one can think of Methodism as ever avoiding the world in the sense of leaving it unappealed to, yet it was rather as a call to men to come out of the evil that its leaders conceived their message. Now,

Hugh Price Hughes' impetus is everywhere: his successor at the West London Mission, Mr Rattenbury, says that the world itself is to be conquered: "it is impossible to read the Gospels fairly without saying that the establishment of a better social order was at least part of the programme of Jesus Christ." The range of the new Methodist hymn-book (1904) illustrates the change: the scope of the hymns for public worship has been enlarged from the region of inward and personal experience to the expression of the Christian experience in nature, in common human affairs, and in national life.

In the actual work of the Nonconformist churches signs of this change are on every hand. A great instance of its coming upon us was that work of Dale in Birmingham which his son most aptly designates "a Municipal Gospel." Everywhere we see what have been hitherto places of worship, pure and simple, with schools and a classroom or two attached, transformed into "Institutional Churches,"

providing for socialities of most manifold character: recreation, amusement, literature, music, and friendly intercourse; and they are designed not only for the welfare of the poor, but for the provision of healthy social life for the young men and women for whom modern urban life makes homes less general than they used to be, and for the working classes, who find it hard to establish homes on sufficient scale for the needs of a wider outlook on life than contented their fathers.

The Free Church Catechism sets before the adherents of those churches no less an aim than "to imbue the nation with the spirit of Christ." Whether we take this as signifying the individuals of the nation, or the nation in its public life, imperial or local, we may fairly say that in the Church of England, as Liberal Churchmen understand it, and in these Churches, there is now a unanimity of general intention which amounts to identity.

## IV. CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS

The old concentration on the Bible closed many eyes to the true features of the other religions of the world. In sadness Christian people thought of them all as false, deceptive, corrupting : as either idolatrous or rationalistic, and wholly opposed to the Christian faith.

A single illustration of this well-known attitude will suffice. The Fernley lecturer of 1884 (Benjamin Hellier), in advocating the "Universal Mission of the Church of Christ" shows no evidence of ever looking into other religions with a desire to meet them. The heathen are all "in unspeakable misery and degradation." Specifically, he has persuaded himself that they know "nothing of peace of mind,—nothing of holiness"; they "sit in darkness, perishing with hunger, full of misery, full of despair." In this uninquiring and unsympathetic spirit the appeals for missionary effort were made for many years.

We see a sign anticipatory of the change in

this as in other things in Baldwin Brown. He notes as prevalent in his own churches such a view as the above: he traces it to Augustinian theology, and for himself affirms that he has come to regard it as "essentially unchristian."

The Fernley lecturer of 1880, Dr Banks, had seen deeper issues: he dwelt on "the danger of underestimating the truth in heathen systems," and speaks of Christ making atonement even for the millions who pass away in ignorance of Him, and of this atonement having effects "in gleams of truth and goodness" amongst them. But he is cautious; and, taking into account the rising advocacy of more generous recognition, he proceeds to mark the error which exaggerates the good in them as even "more dangerous" than the depreciation. He goes forward again, however, when he recognises God's presence throughout history, and reaches our modern point when he states that the whole religious world is "a preparation for Christianity."

For leaders of the present day a few references will be sufficient.

Dr Adeney writes : " The time has gone by when we could be so foolish as to think of honouring Christianity by depreciating what we regarded as its rivals. On the contrary, we carefully pursue the choicest thought of the world, rejoicing to recognise its excellences." Mr Compton Rickett, the Chairman of the Congregational Union : " Nor can we refuse to the Sacred Scriptures of other religions clear echoes of the voice of God." Dr Clifford accepts appreciatively their sacred books and vindicates the authority of the Bible by the method of comparison. Among Methodists, Dr J. H. Moulton of Didsbury College speaks as a special student of comparative religion in earlier phases, and finds himself quite undisconcerted by the evidence of ideas of incarnation, atonement, and resurrection " everywhere " in the world's history, because he has learned that in history the Christian revelation of God has affinities with

“the deepest and most universal instincts of men.”

Professor Geden, of the Wesleyan College, Richmond, after special studies in Eastern religions, writes : “ It is becoming increasingly impossible, and I trust increasingly rare, for a Christian minister, still less a missionary in foreign countries, to regard himself as adequately equipped for his work while he remains in ignorance of the habits and thoughts of alien peoples who, with different preconceptions and from different standpoints, have stretched out their hands towards God ” ; and for himself, he speaks of his impressions not only of the “ haunting picturesqueness,” but of the “ deep religiousness ” of the East.

#### V. CHURCH POLITY

In the polity of the Churches signs of movement towards consolidation are everywhere apparent, both within the Nonconformist Churches and between them. The old rigid independency of the local congregation began

to give way when the Congregational Union was founded by John Angell James in 1831. Since then the proportion of congregations belonging to it has continually increased, and its meetings have been more and more influential; it has issued a Declaration of Principles, has permanent officials, takes note of colleges, and is a centre of energy and counsel. The County Unions exercise a very important unifying function by their ability to grant or refuse "recognition" to ministers elected by the congregations; and there is an approval implied in the ordination which would be withheld if a congregation were acting perversely and injudiciously in its choice of its pastor. These are potent signs of the necessity for transcending the strictness of Independency. Again, the plea made by the late Dr Stoughton that the time had come for grouping the several congregations in a town and adopting municipal boundaries for the unit area, and the affiliating of village churches to the larger churches in the neighbouring towns, indicate

the widening of the range of view. Alexander Hannay toiled for years on behalf of the national Union. In 1901 Dr Joseph Parker, from the Union Chairmanship, made a vehement appeal for a *United Congregational Church*, defined as a unity in name as well as in fact; and this because "things were not going well" on the old lines. The proposal rather took away the breath of many of the rank and file, but it was at once endorsed by such leaders as M'Kennal and Berry, and is at work in many minds.

Federation is the idea which grows in favour: but it is to be real. In the words of Mr F. H. Stead, of the Browning Settlement, "a visible and organic union, which shall give free-play to the spontaneous initiative and boundless diversity" of congregations. Visible, be it noted; no longer remission of unity to the Church invisible: and organic, no longer limiting the reciprocal influences to simple expressions of fraternal sentiment.

A similar movement has taken place among

the Baptists: they also have their County Associations, their National Union, their colleges, their central offices and officials; but I understand that the congregational conception of the Church is retained with great tenacity by most Baptists: visible and organic unity is of small value, even in ideal.

In Methodism the principal sign is the tendency towards consolidation by the closing up of subdivisions. In 1907 three dissident bodies, the New Connexion (formed in 1797), the Bible Christians (1815), and the United Free Churches, itself a later combination, united, and obtained an Act of Parliament sanctioning this so far as the various trust properties were concerned. These bodies were small in numbers, but they were, as a rule, composed of members of particular zeal and force of character, and the achievement of union by them cannot be without effect on the still triple character of English Methodism. The admission of the laity to share in the government of the Church was for a time a

dividing principle, but there is now no difference of opinion on this ; and it is not easy for outside observers to see why the divisions continue, except for historical associations (of no long growth) and questions of church-buildings and properties : certainly the divergences appear too slight to be likely to resist for long the prevailing tendency towards consolidation. Probably the movement towards union will be still quicker in the Colonies, and this will have a reflex effect at home. The consolidation of the three great divisions now remaining would be a very important step towards Christian unity. Some may think that it would tell against union with other Churches, as Methodism would then be still stronger to resist the general force of gravitation ; but at any rate, for the present, the centripetal force at work within its own borders is a marked feature of the time.

Besides these movements towards union within themselves, the forces of consolidation are at work between the great denominations.

Proposals are freely discussed, and are partially set on foot, for taking a town as a unit for Free Churchmanship as a whole. To prevent overlapping and waste through competition, districts are to be assigned to this, that, or the other body according to local circumstances, not according to doctrinal considerations. This amounts to a sinking of differences in the spiritual region which could only be made possible by the sense of overpowering agreement in fundamentals. Similar proposals are made for rural districts; and for villages in which there are more chapels than one, concentration of work in various ways is being considered. In fact, we seem almost in sight of the mapping out of England into a second single system of "parishes" running side by side with the Church of England system, so far as these three great denominations are concerned.

The direction of this movement has assumed form by the formation of local *Free Church Councils*, now numbering 918; and a *National Free Church Council*, to unite them and or-

ganise their activity. Animated to some extent by a common opposition to the "establishment" of religion, their unifying force lies much deeper than that: it is positive, formative, constructive. And, on the whole, it was perhaps the most impressive change for English Nonconformity as the nineteenth century was preparing to make way for the twentieth; and it is now a settled feature for their next stage of growth.

These changes in organisation have naturally led to the appreciation of the need for an expressed common basis of thought and doctrine. In spite of the constitutional aversion to creeds and dogmas felt by so many Nonconformists, they agreed, in 1898, to issue a common statement in the shape of a *Free Church Catechism*: a momentous step, inasmuch as it is, as the compilers themselves point out, the first "combined statement of interdenominational belief" since the days of Luther and Zwingli.

## OUR APPEAL

What is the situation disclosed by the brief survey now given of recent movements in English Nonconformity? As Liberal Churchmen we cannot but feel that we are witnessing indisputable convergence between our thoughts and theirs. On the construction of the Bible and on the nature of its authority, on what is of faith as to the future life, on the duty of the Church to the world, on the place of Christianity among the religions of mankind, there seems to be practical identity between their leaders and ours. In Church polity we see everywhere amongst them actual movements towards centrality and co-ordination, even if not everywhere towards visible and organic unity. Is convergence to prevail in the region of important doctrines whilst all our activities are to continue to run in channels which may be parallel but which must on no account be united into a single course of Christian life and work? My endeavour to

indicate the movements as they present themselves to my own observation would be offered merely as a contribution to history if I did not proceed to some reflection as to the possibility of a further convergence such as I think Liberal Churchmen have in their minds. Let me therefore now offer an argument on the fundamental feature of the situation as between Liberal Churchmen and Nonconformists.

Do the leaders of Nonconformity express any desire to include the visible and organic unity of the Christian religion in England in their theory of the Church? There are beyond question many, represented by Dr Horton, who are quite conservative in their theory of Congregationalism. Dr Horton still appeals to the New Testament period as giving us "a rounded orb" of authority for Church polity, and he reiterates his faith that Congregationalism was so authorised, and is so still. But others have shown a tendency towards including the visible unity of Christians in their conception of the very essence of the Church. Dr

Stoughton taught, so long ago as 1870, that "the Church is more than a combination"; Dr Dale's biography shows his strong mind moving stage after stage away from individualism and the self-sufficiency of the local group. Dr Adeney is so strongly for sociality that it can scarcely be possible for him to be contented with the conception of a society defined by merely local considerations. Dr Forsyth extends the ground of appeal: he says that for Christian institutions, as well as for Christian ideas, "we cannot now go back to the fountain-head and simply ignore the two thousand years of Christian evolution: we cannot do that now in the matter of polity": though I must confess that in another place of the same book his confidence seems to fail him when he says, "It is not in the genius of Christianity that its essence should be distilled for us out of its whole history: the key is given in its source." Still, we can perhaps reconcile these statements, and simply note that while he places the essence at the fountain-head he is determined

also to attribute vitality and value to the later courses of the stream. But Mr Sylvester Horne, the head of the largest Institutional Church of the Congregationalists, is bolder : he plants himself on present efficiency as the criterion of polity : he quotes Hatch's saying that the Church in the twentieth century should be " the Church that is fittest to meet the needs of the new age," and expresses his " cordial agreement " with that theory. With him, therefore, polity is at least an open question.

Now, seventy years ago, before the Congregational Union came into existence, the isolated Independent congregations used to vindicate their polity by appeal to the New Testament epoch of the Church alone ; and within that period the teaching of St Paul's later epistles, Ephesians and Colossians, was little considered. The ideal unity apparent in those epistles and in the Kingdom as proclaimed in the Gospels was obscured by the isolated and disconnected character of the communities founded by the Apostles in the early missionary

period. On this basis of reference there was a plausible case even for an extreme theory of Independency, although the strength of the case was not such as to win for it the support of more than a minority of students of Church history. But, however it might have been seventy years ago, and on the ground of appeal then adopted, we now seriously ask for the attention of the thoughtful supporters of Independency, or of such separateness as acquiescence in the permanence of Methodism implies, to their present situation. They have themselves changed their ground of appeal. As we have seen in the section dealing with their new view of the proof of the authority of Scripture itself, they now appeal to the "massed experiences" of believers in the nineteen centuries as well as to the influence of the Spirit upon the individual reader of the sacred writings. We claim that this should bring them into line with ourselves: by this appeal we all show that we regard the Kingdom of Christ as one and continuous, and

the ministration of the Holy Spirit as still proceeding in a manner not in essence different from that of His ministration in the minds of the early disciples. Surely, then, our ground of appeal should not be reduced to the thin stream of experience of those Christians who retained Independency or local association as their principle of Church polity? We see sometimes the history of the Christian consciousness regarded as if it sank into a marsh, a thousand years broad, with only a few stepping-stones, such as Augustine, the Albigenses, and Wyclif before the Reformation, and afterwards, in England, showed *terra firma* only in the strictest Puritans and the later Evangelicals. But the modern sense of the continuity of all human life, and the revived sense of the continued presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church all along the centuries, are shared by the leaders of the Free Churches and by Liberal Churchmen in the Church of England. May we not now unite in bringing to light the deeper continuity? in seeing that

truth was aimed at even under the distortions of doctrine, and efficiency even under the corruptions of practice and presumptions of authority we agree in lamenting? We are as anxious as they to shake free from obsolete modes of intellectual expression, from mediæval and seventeenth-century forms of Church government and regulation, in so far as these belonged to epochs of thought and life which have passed away. We agree, for example, that the nature of the authority proper to Church Councils and their decrees was misconceived: that it never should have been intruded into the innermost region between the source of Divine light in Jesus Christ and the soul of the disciple. We agree that even in their proper sphere, the ordering of the public life of the Christian community, Councils were too peremptory and dictatorial, and that they made woeful error in ever calling upon the secular arm for the enforcement of their decisions upon either thought or life. But we ask our friends to believe that even in the

darkest ages Councils, even of Bishops, honestly aimed at beneficent objects, and sought the assistance of the Holy Spirit in sincerity : and dare we say that this was ever wholly withheld from them ? We point now to the continued and increasing practical acknowledgment on the part of Nonconformists of the necessity of councils and decrees, though they are now designated “ assemblies ” and “ resolutions.” With the recent “ declarations of faith,” “ manuals of principles,” manifesto of “ points requiring emphasis,” and catechisms in our hands, we see evidence that corporate acts of this kind cannot be dispensed with : that they are acknowledged to be signs of growing life. If, then, we refuse to regard the corporate action of the Church during the nineteen centuries as animated by the same purpose as these recent corporate actions, does not the appeal which Nonconformists now agree with us in making to the continuity and abiding unity of Christian experience almost fall through, and the modern apologetic stand before the world on a perilously narrow base ?

We ask, then, that those who are animated by the modern historical sense and who rely upon it as the witness of truth and authority, should join with us in perceiving that this implies a greater reality for the unity of the Church than was seen fifty years ago. An ideal unity, invisible not visible, in sentiment but not in organisation, can no longer content us. To make it visible and organic, for ourselves and in view of the waiting world, cannot but be an aim for which Christian men can never cease to labour and to pray. Before the thought of men in West and East we desire to present a philosophy of the Church which sets the One in superiority to the Many; a theology which expands the doctrine of a one and undivided Body of Christ in terms that plain men cannot mistake, because it is affirmed of the Church as they can see it and not in recondite and esoteric significances; a method of Society which unites in a common stream and not in parallel channels the spiritual energies of Christ's disciples. For the convergences which we

see already we are deeply grateful ; that they may pass into manifest unity as this century proceeds must be our hope. It is our differences that are fading into the past : into that part of the past which was occasional and transitory. We feel continuity throbbing with a force which cannot be concealed and left underneath the surface. Our eyes are bright with the vision which Thirlwall saw of "the Lord's great house, with earth for its floor and heaven for its roof." We look for a development of the Christian religion in England, as well nationally as in the inner hearts of men and women, that will at once embody what is best in a noble though chequered past, and express the new light and the freer energies of the time of hope in which we are so happy as to live.

#### ESTABLISHMENT

The problem of the continuance of the "Establishment" of the Church remains between Liberal Churchmen and Liberal Non-

conformists. Not completely so, of course, because many Liberal Churchmen have renounced hope of seeing an Established Church continued on such lines as their Liberalism can approve. In what I have to say, therefore, I only speak as one inviting attention to reflections which the general principles of Liberalism prompt in some minds at least.

In the first place: Is it not true that for many Liberals what is rightly objected to is not establishment itself, but the establishment of the wrong thing? What is wanted is the national recognition of the Church of Christ in the twentieth century; what we have is the continuance of the Church of the Tudor and Stuart settlements of religion. What is desirable is a connection between the Nation and the Church on broad and comprehensive lines and in a varied and elastic constitution; what we have is, as Hort said, a dualism between Parliament and two unreformed Clerical Convocations.

In the second place: We have to deal with a large mass of tangible bequests of the past;

not to speak of the endowments, the cathedrals and parish churches are a heritage beyond price. To sever the relation between Church and State now would give one or other of two lamentable results. The endowments and the edifices might be removed from the service of religion altogether: the lands and tithes are loosely attached to it, and with the congenital indifference of material property they could be transferred to other uses—a course which nothing but absolute proof of incurable perniciousness could justify. Or else the time-honoured places of worship disposed over all our towns, villages, and hamlets would be handed over to a portion of the nation, and mainly to that part of it which is most unable to accept the second Reformation now in process. In this latter case, the inheritance of the past would be in the hands of those who, according to the judgment of Nonconformists themselves, are more remote from the simplicities and breadths of religion than the Church of England as at present situated.

And thirdly: Is it the right moment for dispensing with the legacies of the past and narrowing the use of the ancient churches, when what is conspicuous before our eyes is the manifold convergence of Christians who have hitherto walked apart? On the important points indicated in this paper, convergence among English Christians is taking place; and there are other similar points. Is a time of an increasing agreement, and a brightening prospect of consolidation in temper and spirit that is at least making towards a visible unity which will efface the separatism of the last three centuries, the moment for an irrevocable decision either to remove endowments from religion altogether or to confirm an unreformed part of the Christian community in the sole use of the oldest and most venerable Houses of Prayer in the land?

I think that there is in the minds of many, except those who have adopted an unchangeable conviction that national action in religion is in its nature indefensible, a feeling that the

present is a time too transitional, too deeply fraught with movement in theology and in social order, to be chosen for taking a step which would terminate finally a connection between the nation and its religion as old as the national history itself.

And as against the temptation to fall back on the line of least resistance—for abolition is always easier than construction, and even than maintenance—I would suggest that it is possible that for England there may be a special call to stand firm, and to lead the world in the matter of the connection between the nation and the Christian religion. We need not follow France, face to face as she is with a branch of the Church which refuses to come out of Mediævalism. And we need not be content to learn lessons of supreme polity from our own Colonies or from America in their untried youth. In the broad Christianity of the future, national as well as individualist religion may still be possible, and the demonstration of the possibility may be the high privilege of the English nation.

# GERMAN EVANGELIC LIBERALISM

BY

THE REV. WILLIAM D. MORRISON

IN the Protestant Church of Germany religious Liberalism may be described as a tendency or group of tendencies: a widely diffused principle rather than a highly organised ecclesiastical party. In this respect it resembles the movement of Liberal religious opinion among ourselves. In all countries and among all sections of the Christian Church the progress and development of Liberalism have been more conspicuously the result of the ideas it has advocated than of its organisation as a party within the Church. As a party within the German Church, religious Liberalism is not to be compared with the powerful conservative forces to which it is on many points opposed ;

but as a living, vigorous principle permeating the whole organism of ecclesiastical thought and life, it is probable that religious Liberalism was never more effective than it is to-day. If we examine the ecclesiastical situation in Germany, we shall find that the opponents of the Liberal attitude of mind in religious matters are continually making concessions to it on points of policy and doctrine. They do not become Liberals in name, but they assimilate much of the substance of Liberalism, and in this way perform an inestimable service in modifying or transforming the traditional attitude of mind.

One of the most distinguished and influential leaders of the conservative elements in the German Church at the present moment is Professor Reinhold Seeberg of the University of Berlin. Professor Seeberg has a wide reputation as a writer on Christian dogma, and his work on the German Church in the nineteenth century, as well as his recent lectures on the essential truths of Christianity, amply

justify the esteem in which he is held. One of the fundamental tenets of religious Liberalism in Germany is that we must make a distinction between the form and the substance of religious doctrine. It is not contended that the Church can do without doctrinal forms in the expression of its religious aspirations and experiences ; but it is maintained that the outward vesture of religious belief is not necessarily an essential part of its vital texture. The form is a product of the age in which it arises, and is determined by the imperfect knowledge of the time : it is an attempt to express the permanent contents of the Christian faith in terms conformable to the prevailing conceptions of the world and man. In the introduction to his work on the German Church in the nineteenth century, Dr Seeberg frankly accepts and emphasises this principle. He says that von Hofmann of Erlangen uttered the immortal phrase for the present ecclesiastical situation when he said that what is now needed is “a new way of teaching old truths.” The

eighteenth century, owing to its want of historical insight, was unable to distinguish between the old truths and the old forms in which these truths were clothed, and on this account it rejected both. The nineteenth century has succeeded in perceiving this distinction; it has largely recovered the old truths, but it has failed to find satisfactory forms for expressing them. Professor Seeberg with the Liberals contends that the old forms are dead; they cannot be revived. The great problem before the Church at the present time is the creation of new forms for the old faith which are adapted to the needs of modern life. On this fundamental point Dr Seeberg is at one with his colleague, Professor Harnack. In an address recently delivered at the University of Berlin on Protestantism and Catholicism, Dr Harnack, one of the most eminent leaders of German religious Liberalism, in speaking of the doctrinal differences between these two forms of Christianity, stated that the time had come when the Evangelic

Church must openly declare that the old confessions were not a law which the Church must endure, but an inheritance from the past which may be used with freedom. It is significant and impressive to find that a trusted representative of tradition and an eminent representative of progress should be at one as to the nature of the task which is now confronting the modern Christian Church.

But it is only in an atmosphere of freedom that the problem of finding new forms for the old faith can properly be solved. It is here that the point of cleavage arises between the ordinary traditionalists and the Liberals, or, as some of them prefer to call themselves, the modernists. The traditionalists as a body, unlike Dr Seeberg, assert that the essence of Christianity consists in its dogmatic contents, and that its dogmatic contents are to be found in the ecclesiastical confessions of the past. It is contended that the only people who have a right to teach in the parishes and

at the universities are men who are prepared to give an *ex animo* assent to the doctrines contained in these confessions. The Church has no duties towards Christians who cannot accept them. In opposition to this view the Liberals maintain that the essence of the Christian faith does not consist in its dogmatic but in its religious and moral contents. It is not a man's theoretical opinions upon points of dogma which make him a Christian, but the religious and moral character of his life. The Christian religion is not supremely concerned with metaphysical speculations about dogma, but it is supremely concerned with the manner in which a Christian ought to live. In a pamphlet published by the oldest of the German Liberal societies (the German Protestant Union) it is stated that the traditionalists are aiming at securing the supremacy of one dogmatic system in the Church, whereas the object of the Liberals is the free development of the religious life in all its varied forms. A younger society (the Union of Friends of

the Christian World) emphasises a similar point of view. We stand, says this society, for the absolute freedom of theological inquiry and for the right of the public expression of its results. These are the indispensable conditions of the development of evangelic religion among the people. We demand freedom for our students of divinity in the formation of their convictions and the protection of all who are exercising ecclesiastical functions against the application to them of a rigid interpretation of the articles of faith. It is only on these conditions that the clergy can enjoy the confidence of the people. A society which takes up a middle position between the Liberals and the Conservatives is equally insistent on the need of liberty (the Evangelic National Church Union). According to this society the teachers of theology must remember that they exercise their office in the service of the Church. But it is in the interests of the Church itself that these teachers should enjoy undisputed freedom. It is true that freedom is not of itself a solution

of the task which lies before the Church ; the importance of freedom consists in the fact that it is the only instrument which will enable a solution to be found. Fetters on the mind are as fatal to life and movement as fetters on the limbs, and the occasional aberrations arising from the spirit of liberty are far less dangerous to the Christian Church than the immobility and numbness inevitably produced by a dogmatic despotism.

The doctrinal standpoint of the German Protestant Union was set forth by this society in a leaflet issued to the public in 1905. In this leaflet the society asserts that it places the religious and moral import of Christianity in the foreground. " It is not the acceptance as true of certain dogmatic propositions of bygone times which makes a man a Christian. He only is a Christian who puts his trust in God revealed in Christ as the Heavenly Father : who pronounces the Lord's Prayer with an honest heart : who follows Jesus Christ in the task of moral regeneration and brotherly love.

Such a man has a full right to be a member of the Evangelic Church, even if he doubts or disapproves of the dogmas of the Church. It is not dogmatic opinions, but a religious moral character which makes the Christian." The doctrinal position of the centre party in the German Church (the Evangelic National Church Union) does not differ in essentials from the attitude of the more advanced party as represented by the German Protestant Union. "The ground of our salvation," says the programme of the Evangelic National Church Union, "is the revelation of God in Christ. The historical source and standard of revelation is Holy Scripture. . . . We separate ourselves, on the one hand, from those who regard the evangelic faith as bound down to certain given forms and formulas, and who consider the confessions of faith as being of the same character as legal documents. With us attachment to the Evangelic Church consists in the possession of common religious ideals, and above all in an inward relation of the soul to God in Christ.

We are able to recognise fellowship in the faith, even where we differ both in form and degree with regard to Christian doctrine. On the other hand, we separate ourselves from those who, overlooking the continuous presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, regard the formulas of the past as a burdensome inheritance from bygone times. We look upon ourselves as substantially at one with the faith of our Church as it found expression in the formulas of the Reformation. But we no longer look upon the letter of these formulas as a satisfactory expression of the spirit by which they are inspired."

At the present time it may be said of the German Church as a whole that the dominant movement within it, especially at the universities, is a movement from dogma to religion. This great movement was originated by Schleiermacher more than a century ago, and all parties and shades of opinion in the German Church have been drawn into it. It is recognised that dogmas are the attempts of the

Church at various periods of its history to express the contents of the religious consciousness in the terminology of the times in which they were framed. It is felt that this terminology is more or less of a temporary character. The religious truth which it enshrines is not dependent upon it, and is capable of being expressed in other forms. The great saving truths of the Christian religion must not be sacrificed to the dogmatic forms in which many of them have come down to us. Dogma exists for the edification of the Church; the Church does not exist for the maintenance of dogma. When dogmas cease to edify; when they cease to appeal to heart and conscience; when they cease to represent the highest Christian consciousness; when they become unintelligible, then the truths which dogmas contain must be liberated from their traditional envelope and re-expressed in a manner which will once more enable them to touch and elevate the souls of men. In short, dogma must be subordinated to religion; it

must follow and not dominate the living spirit of the Church.

*Note.*—In this brief paper it has been impossible to present the characteristics of modern German theology except in the most summary outline. The following books will assist the reader who wishes to make a study of the subject:—

Historical: “Protestantisches Christentum und Kirche in der Neuzeit,” von Ernst Toreltsch: an elaborate essay in a volume entitled *Die Christliche Religion*, Berlin, Teubner, 1906; *Die Kirche Deutschlands im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, von Reinhold Seeberg, Leipzig, Deichert, 1904; *Geschichte und Kritik der neuern Theologie*, von F. H. R. von Frank, bearbeitet und bis zur gegenwart fortgefuehrt von R. H. Gruetzmacher, Leipzig, Deichert, 1908. For a brief historical sketch see *Die Religioesen Stroemungen der Gegenwart*, von H. Braasch, Leipzig, Teubner, 1904.

The following are some of the principal books

on Christian doctrine :—(1) Books of the older Liberal school: *Christliche Dogmatik*, von A. E. Biedermann, Berlin, Reimer, 1884; *Lehrbuch der Evangelisch-Protestantisch Dogmatik*, von R. A. Lipsius, Braunschweig Schwetschke, 1893; *Grundriss der Christlichen Glaubens und Sittenlehre*, von O. Pfleiderer, Berlin, Reimer, 1898. (2) Books of the Ritschlian or “modern” school: *Die Christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, von A. Ritschl, Bonn, A. Marcus, 1888; *What is Christianity?* by A. Harnack, London, Williams & Norgate, 1904; *The Communion of the Christian with God*, by W. Hermann, London, Williams & Norgate, 1906; *Dogmatik*, von Julius Kaftan, Tuebingen, Mohr, 1901; *Christliche Glaubenslehre*, von Reischle, Halle, Niemeyr, 1904; *Die Christliche Glaube*, von Th. Haering, Stuttgart, 1906; *System der Christlichen Lehre*, von H. H. Wendt, Goettingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1906. (3) The history of religions movement: *Die Absolutheit des*

*Christentums in der Religionsgeschichte*, E. Troeltsch, Tuebingen, Mohr, 1902.

The above list makes no pretension to be complete ; but it embraces the most representative books.

# ROMAN CATHOLIC LIBERALISM

BY

THE REV. A. L. LILLEY

IF by Liberal theology we mean the attempt to justify the Christian faith to the intelligence of to-day, then nowhere has it found more sincere and adequate expression than in the Roman communion. It is certain Roman theologians who have recognised most clearly the conditions of the contemporary apologetic problem. Those conditions are of two kinds; on the one hand the present-day conception of what knowledge is and how it is acquired, on the other the form of that traditional apologetic which has to be replaced. The first condition is the same for all the Christian communions, the second varies for each of them.

It is exactly because the latter condition presents greater difficulties in the Roman Church than elsewhere that there the problem has been faced with perfect honesty and courage. It is only when life itself is at stake that the full powers of life are evoked. Self-preservation, a mere latent instinct in times of peace and safety, becomes a fully-developed capacity when destruction is imminent. That has been the case in Rome since 1870. In promulgating the Vatican decrees, Roman authority implicitly recognised that its spiritual Twentieth of September had arrived. Just as the prisoner of the local and political Vatican condemned and defied the whole world of modern politics and government, so it was a prisoner of the spiritual and scholastic Vatican who defied and condemned the whole world of modern thought. The syllabus of 1864 was something of a prophecy, for the doom which its condemnation of all that was politically alive and real entailed upon him who condemned it was not accomplished till

1870. So also the Vatican decrees were something of a prophecy, for their condemnation of all that is living and real in thought took complete effect only when Leo XIII. forced the Church to become the prisoner of scholasticism by issuing the Encyclical *Æterni Patris*.

It is impossible, then, to appreciate the full import of the modern Liberal movement in Roman theology without taking account of the necessity which called it into being and of the full extent of that necessity. In the Roman Church after 1870, and especially after the Encyclical of 1879, no apologetic was any longer possible, seeing that no common ground was left on which faith and reason could meet and conduct their eternal debate. Faith had excommunicated contemporary thought. It imposed itself henceforward by a single inclusive act of authority. Only a theological revolution could save religion for that section of the world which needs to think its religion in order to live it, and needs especially to think it because

it is living it and would live it more fully. The theological revolution, therefore, was forthwith declared in the Roman communion.

Now Roman theology, thus liberated, was forced to recognise the universal conditions of a fruitful apologetic in our time. And because of the hardness of the necessity which constrained it, it recognised them more fully than they had been recognised elsewhere. Outside the Roman pale, apologetic was still alive. Mere authority was not sufficient as a guarantee of faith. Theologians still trafficked in the interests of religion with the thought of their time, and naturally drove the hardest bargain they could. The apologetic of the past was being gradually modified to meet the needs of the present. As always happens in such cases, the result was a series of partial and largely unreal compromises. But the Roman apologist had the advantage of making a fresh beginning. The apologetic officially recognised and even enforced in his own communion was a thing of the past.

It had no relation whatever with current habits of thought. He had no alternative but to set it aside in its entirety and devise a new one. He may not, indeed, have realised at once the full measure of the task he had undertaken, but it was not long before he was compelled to do so.

What, then, the Roman theologian found, on girding himself to his task, was that he was in presence of a long religious tradition which he had inherited. This tradition had become identified at every point with the intellectual expression and justification of it which had sufficed in a distant past, but was no longer valid. The problem, therefore, was to preserve the tradition intact while replacing the intellectual forms under which it was apprehended. In doing this he was driven to consider more closely in what the permanent tradition consisted. He soon discovered that this tradition was a series of faith-affirmations concerning the character of the Power that was working in and through phenomena.

History witnessed to the fact that this tradition was as old as the race, that man was a religious being, that the Christian Church could trace its direct spiritual descent from the feeble beginnings of faith in Israel, and through Israel its collateral descent from many Oriental forms of faith no longer extant save in their transformed life among ourselves. He concluded, therefore, that human history, rightly conceived, was a religious history, the story of the "*gesta Dei per homines*," and that no Christian apologetic which overlooked this continuity of religious growth could successfully appeal to our age with its conception of history as a continuous, but vital, development. The non-religious historian might indeed account for the undoubted fact of historical development by alleging that it was the mere continuity of a mechanical process. But the religious historian could not do less than claim that the whole process was free and vital, that it was all the work of God through human wills which were free only because and only in so

far as they were expressing, however feebly and imperfectly, some aspect of the Divine Will. And when the religious historian made this claim, when he no longer conceived of God as merely intruding into history here and there in miraculous ways, when he ceased to shut out God from the general movement of history, then the non-religious historian would cease to be. For it was exactly this denial that had created that disturbing human portent.

But, again, this revelation of God in history was a revelation through men, through the powers with which God had constituted men. It was men who recognised Him, even though they recognised Him in virtue of His own immediate inspiration. And, therefore, all religion had its phenomenal side. Faith seized its divine object, but it seized it through the medium of human powers, powers which can only live through growth, and which find their expression in changing forms of thought and action and order. No achievement, whether in the realm of truth, of right, or of govern-

ment, is final. It is not final just because humanity is still growing. The absolute truth or right or order would have no meaning to us till we had ourselves grown into the absolute, and therefore ceased to be the creatures of time and change which we are. We are, indeed, in order that we may grow at all, rooted in the Absolute of truth and right which is God. We apprehend it immediately by faith as perfect Spirit working in our imperfect spirits. But there is here question only of that particular apprehension which mediates itself through thought and law and institutions and practical ideals of right. And such apprehension is relative to the stage of growth which we have reached. Every external expression of religion therefore has its history. It belongs to the natural order, and is determined by the conditions which prevail in the natural order. Worship, dogma, Church organisation are natural expressions of the supernatural and Divine activity in the hearts of men which we realise for ourselves as faith, and have their

value only in so far as they are instrumental to faith. Where faith is alive, it will determine its own expressions, it will create the correspondence it needs between itself and the world of thought, of moral ideals, and of government.

But let us look a little more closely at the work of analysis which the Roman Liberals have accomplished on the unsifted material of religious tradition. Let us take that particular expression of Christian faith which is called dogma. Dogma is the attempt of Christian faith to think itself accurately, to convert itself into terms of ordered thought, to place itself in some kind of living relation with the whole body of our knowledge. Now it is necessary that such an attempt should reflect the thought-forms, the conception and the substance of knowledge, of the time at which it was made, or rather, as dogma is usually a retarded crystallisation of thought, of the time when the conflict of opinion out of which it has issued was hottest. Nothing, therefore, can

be more transient than the thought-value of dogma. As a rule, its thought-value has been discounted, for the reasons just stated, even before it becomes dogma. History alone can show us, but it can always show us, how the one persistent faith in God, sometimes through the enlargement and intensification of its own vision, sometimes by reason of the new problems it has to face, has adapted and utilised ever new thought-forms for its expression, in order that it might remain the same essential faith through the different stages of its growth. When, therefore, we use any dogmatic statement to express our faith, we do not profess a belief either in the validity or in the adequacy of its thought-form. That may mean to us practically nothing, or it may be merely inadequate. In any case, we are expressing our faith in a particular manifestation of the Divine character or activity which was originally expressed through this form.

And here there arises one of those considerations on which many of the Roman Liberals

have most strongly insisted, and which has more than any other given rise to a misunderstanding of their position. They have pointed out that no phenomenal fact can be the object of religious faith, that God alone is the object of faith, that facts are no more and cannot ever be more than the occasions of that faith. When we repeat the creeds we do not express our belief in facts, but our faith in certain aspects of the Divine character and activity occasioned by certain facts. The life and death of Jesus, for instance, were facts of history, yet they did not compel faith in Jesus as the Son of God or faith in the atoning efficacy of His death. They were merely the occasions of the spontaneous faith of the disciples in those Divine realities to which alone the creed desires to witness. But, it is replied, if the facts were the original occasion of the peculiarly Christian faith, then that faith still implies a belief in the historical reality of the facts. The Roman Liberal does not dissent from such an obvious proposition.

But he asks us to distinguish between those facts which in the creeds are connected with faith as its original occasions. Some of them are facts of history in the strictest sense. Their reality as historical happenings was manifest to immense multitudes of the contemporaries of Jesus in Galilee and Jerusalem, and that quite independently of the faith-import which a few of those contemporaries found in them. But there are other facts such as the Descent into Hell, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Heavenly Session, whose reality lies altogether outside the purview of history. It cannot, indeed, be denied that there were certain fact-occasions of at least some of these truths of faith, though it is next to impossible for criticism to define their exact measure. But, whatever that measure may have been, faith outstripped it and represented as happening in the phenomenal sphere what happened actually in the spiritual sphere. Such facts of the creed were really spiritual facts, spiritually discerned

but phenomenally conceived and represented. For us the phenomenal representation may prove invalid while the certainty of the spiritual fact remains. It is clear, for instance, that unless we are still to believe that Heaven is above the clouds, and Hell in the centre of the earth, we cannot understand the Ascension of our Lord and His descent into Hell as the early Christians understood it, and as indeed all Christians did at least down to the time of Galileo. Yet we feel no difficulty about using the forms of representation which were so long current in the Christian Church to express a faith which is as really ours as it was theirs. Again, our Lord's Resurrection is not a datum of history.<sup>1</sup> The historical data are the appearances to the disciples and the empty tomb. But, as one of the Roman Liberals has pointed out, the historian will not conclude from these facts to the resuscitation of our Lord's body.

<sup>1</sup> So far, at least, as the Canonical Gospels are concerned. It is true that in the "Gospel of Peter" the Resurrection itself becomes a datum of history.

He is forced by his own methods to exhaust all the many probable hypotheses to account for these facts before he accepts what will seem to him, as a historian, the most improbable. The Resurrection is for us as much an assertion of faith as it was for the disciples who believed that the Messiah of God could not be holden of death, as it was for St Paul who believed in it with the same invincible certainty with which he believed in the general resurrection of the dead. Nor do we feel any difficulty about expressing our faith in it through a representation of its method which was the natural and inevitable medium of expression of that same faith for the first disciples.

It is on these lines that Liberal Roman theology has attempted to outline an apologetic which will be sufficient to justify the Christian faith, in so far as it is really a faith and not an amalgam of faith and dead science, to contemporary thought. Its merit is that it not only does not distrust the learning of our day with

its new methods, but that it welcomes it and all the truth that it reveals as, on their own level, an immediate revelation of God. The certainties of faith are on a higher level, but they are not therefore and cannot be in conflict with the certainties of our other knowledge. On the contrary, the witness of the two planes of knowledge is consentient and complementary. It is impossible to say whether Roman Liberalism will succeed in transforming Rome. It cannot, of course, do so without in the process destroying the intellectual despotism which has done its best to paralyse that Church, and which must, if unchecked, succeed in paralysing it altogether. But whether the Liberal leaven succeeds in permeating the Roman lump or not, it is chiefly through the sincere and undiluted quality which certain Roman theologians have imparted to that leaven—so, at least, it seems to the present writer—that it will work throughout Christendom to form the Church of the future.



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